

EXECUTIVE SESSION

PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: DAVID J. KRAMER

Tuesday, December 19, 2017

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-304, the Capitol,
commencing at 10:00 a.m.

Present: Representatives Conaway, Rooney, Ros-Lehtinen, Schiff, Himes,
Speier, Quigley, Swalwell, Castro, and Heck.

Appearances:

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

For DAVID J. KRAMER:

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██████████ Good morning, all.

This is a transcribed interview of David Kramer.

Thank you for speaking to us today.

For the record, I am ██████████ senior counsel at the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence for the majority. Also present are a number of other members and staff. We'll introduce you to them as the proceedings get underway. But before we begin, I want to state a few things for the record.

Questioning will be conducted by members and staff. During the course of this interview, they may ask questions during their allotted time period. Some of these questions may seem basic, but that is because we need to clearly establish the facts and understand the situation.

Please do not assume we know any facts you have previously disclosed as part of any other investigation or review. I will note, this interview will be conducted at the unclassified level.

During the course of this interview we will take any breaks that you desire, and we ask that you give complete and fulsome replies to questions based on your best recollections. If a question is unclear or you are uncertain in your response, just please let us know. And if you do not know the answer to a question or cannot remember, simply say so.

You're entitled to have counsel present for you during this interview, and I see that you have brought them with you.

If at this time counsel could state their names for the record.

MR. ROBBINS: Sure. Larry Robbins from the law firm of Robbins, Russell, and various other names, including Untereiner.

MR. UNTEREINER: Alan Untereiner.

██████████ Thank you.

The interview will be transcribed. There is a reporter making a record of these proceedings so we can easily consult a written compilation of your answers at a later date.

Because the reporter cannot record gestures, we ask that you answer all questions verbally. If you forget to do this, you might be reminded to do so. You may also be asked to spell certain terms or unusual phrases.

Consistent with the committee's rules of procedure, you and your counsel, upon request, will have a reasonable opportunity to inspect the transcript of this interview in order to determine whether your answers were correctly transcribed.

The transcript will remain in the committee's custody. And the committee also reserves the right to request your return for additional questions should the need arise.

The process for this interview will be follows. The majority will be given 45 minutes to ask questions, then the minority will be given 45 minutes to ask questions. Thereafter, we will take a break if you desire, immediately after which time, the majority will be given 15 minutes to ask questions and the minority will be given 15 minutes to ask questions.

These 15-minute rounds will continue until questioning has been completed. Time will be adhered to by all sides for each round, and a warning of 5 minute and 1 minute respectively will be given during each round.

To ensure confidentiality, we ask that you do not discuss the interview with anyone other than your attorney.

You are reminded that it is unlawful to deliberately provide false information to Members of Congress or staff.

Lastly, the record will reflect that you are voluntarily participating in this interview, which will be under oath.

Mr. Kramer, could you raise your right hand to be sworn, please?

Do you swear or affirm the testimony you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

MR. KRAMER: I do.

██████████ Thank you.

And as a reminder, if you could just leave that microphone on, since you will be doing most of the talking, so the reporter can record it.

Mr. Chairman, over to you for any opening remarks.

MR. CONAWAY: Thank you.

Mr. Schiff, Mr. Quigley, any comments?

MR. SCHIFF: No. I just want to welcome you and appreciate your coming in today.

MR. KRAMER: Thank you.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. We'll start with our 45 minutes on our side.

So, Mr. Kramer, we'll just go through some kind of background, generic kind of things.

Can you tell us how did you come to be working for the Senate and what your overall background, just quickly?

MR. KRAMER: Sorry. Working for whom, sir?

MR. CONAWAY: Just walk us through your background and your relationship with John McCain.

MR. KRAMER: Sure.

I have -- I lived in Washington for 24 years. I moved in May to Miami, where

I'm now a senior fellow at Florida International University. In the '90s I worked for various think tanks. And I worked all 8 years in the Bush administration, until January 2009.

My last position, I was assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor, and before that I was deputy assistant secretary for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.

After leaving the State Department, I was at the German Marshall Fund for a year and a half. Then I became president of Freedom House for 4 years.

And after that, in November 2014, I was asked to join the McCain Institute for International Leadership, which is part of Arizona State University. It's named after the senator and his family, but it's obviously not a part of his Senate office. And I was there until May of this year, when I moved to Florida.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. So walk us through how you -- did you know Mr. Steele before? Or when did you meet Mr. Steele for the first time?

MR. KRAMER: I met him for the first time on November 28 in London.

MR. CONAWAY: What year?

MR. KRAMER: Of 2016.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. And how did you come to meet him there?

MR. KRAMER: I was approached in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at an international conference that I have attended now for 9 years by Sir Andrew Wood, who was a former British ambassador to Russia and to Yugoslavia, someone I've known for half a dozen years, someone of great reputation, who is now affiliated with Chatham House.

And Sir Andrew approached me on the margins of the Halifax International Security Forum, told me that he was aware of research that had been done by a

company he was aware of, Orbis, that is -- was founded by Mr. Steele.

Sir Andrew stressed that he had not seen the document himself but had been told that it involved potential compromising material on Mr. Trump and possible collusion on the part of his campaign with the Russians.

And that's how I first became aware of this. And he suggested that this might be of interest to Senator McCain.

MR. CONAWAY: So why did you believe Sir Andrew would -- comments to you since he said he hadn't read it?

MR. KRAMER: He, I believe, described himself as an informal adviser to Mr. Steele. He had known Mr. Steele when Mr. Steele worked in MI6. He thought he -- Sir Andrew thought that Mr. Steele was somebody with a very strong reputation. And my own view of Sir Andrew was also one that his reputation preceded him, that he was someone of impeccable credentials.

And so it was based on that that I suggested he tell Senator McCain what Sir Andrew had told me, and Senator McCain was at the Halifax conference as well.

MR. CONAWAY: Oh, okay. So --

MR. KRAMER: And so that's how it went from me to Senator McCain. And so I arranged for Senator McCain to listen to what Sir Andrew said, and we met on the margins of the conference.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. So establishing how did you know Senator McCain?

MR. KRAMER: Senator McCain I had known when I was in the State Department, testified on a few committees where he was present. And when I was at Freedom House, in particular, got to know him better. We, when I was at Freedom House, gave him a leadership award for his leadership on the Magnitsky

Act that was passed, and attended the Sedona forum, which he and Mrs. McCain have hosted out in Sedona, Arizona, including a cookout at their ranch. And then when I joined the McCain Institute he was supportive of my joining.

MR. CONAWAY: So why do you think Sir Andrew -- you did not know Sir Andrew before that?

MR. KRAMER: I did, sir, yes.

MR. CONAWAY: Oh, you did?

MR. KRAMER: I had for 5 or 6 years.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. So why do you think Sir Andrew came to you instead of going directly to Senator McCain at that conference?

MR. KRAMER: He knew me, and he did not know the senator. And so I think I was the way to get this introduced to Senator McCain.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. And then what did you do?

MR. KRAMER: So I arranged for the senator to sit down with Sir Andrew and me. Sir Andrew said the same thing that he said to me, which was he was aware of the existence of this report that had been compiled that suggested compromising material on Mr. Trump and the possibility of collusion. And he said that the person who had this was in London, a former MI6 officer, and Senator McCain turned to me and asked me to go to London to meet with Mr. Steele.

MR. CONAWAY: So did you find that odd, that McCain would enlist you in his employ, in a sense, out of the clear blue sky like that? Were you already going to London?

MR. KRAMER: No. No.

MR. CONAWAY: So you had to make a separate trip. Who paid for your plane?

MR. KRAMER: I did. I used miles and then I paid for the \$165 airport fee.

MR. CONAWAY: Yeah. So you didn't find it odd that McCain would basically deputize you to head to London on his behalf?

MR. KRAMER: Under the circumstances, I didn't find it particularly odd. I mean, I found what Sir Andrew was telling me rather alarming. I think Senator McCain was also of the view that it was rather alarming.

Neither of us at that point was in a position to judge the veracity of it based on what we were told without even having seen it. But I believe that Senator McCain felt to simply ignore it would not have been the responsible thing to have done.

MR. CONAWAY: How long did you all -- did the meeting with --

MR. KRAMER: Sir Andrew.

MR. CONAWAY: -- Sir Andrew and McCain and you last?

MR. KRAMER: Ten, 15 minutes.

MR. CONAWAY: Was anybody else there with you? Just you three?

MR. KRAMER: It was Chris Brose, who was the Senator's staff director on Armed Services, was also there.

MR. CONAWAY: Chris who?

MR. KRAMER: Christopher Brose.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. So give us a sense of what McCain's reaction was. You said you thought he was alarmed. What do you remember him saying specifically to Mr. Wood or Sir Wood?

MR. KRAMER: He turned to me during the meeting and asked me if I would be willing to go to London to meet with Mr. Steele, and I agreed to do so. And he said that, you know, this was something that we couldn't just ignore and pretend that we had not heard. Beyond that, there wasn't a great deal of reaction.

MR. CONAWAY: Yeah. And no conversation with he and his chief of staff as to why the chief of staff wouldn't go as opposed to you just -- he came to that conclusion without any consultation with his chief?

MR. KRAMER: He did it on the spot, so there was no consultation.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. All right. So then what happened?

MR. KRAMER: So that was on November 19. I flew Sunday night, November 27 to London, arrived --

MR. CONAWAY: So the conference lasted a week?

MR. KRAMER: No. No. I'm sorry. The conference was over a weekend, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, but it took me 8, 9 days to get to London.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. So you went back home? You came back to the United States?

MR. KRAMER: Correct.

MR. CONAWAY: Back to Arizona?

MR. KRAMER: No. The McCain Institute is here in D.C.

MR. CONAWAY: Here in D.C., okay. Right. Right. Right. Right.

MR. KRAMER: Sorry. So I came back to Washington. I was here for that week. In fact, I think it was the week of Thanksgiving. So I left the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend to go to London.

MR. CONAWAY: The Sunday after Thanksgiving?

MR. KRAMER: Correct. Yes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: Do you think that was the 27th?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. And I was in London the 28th.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. So who gave you Steele's contact information?

MR. KRAMER: Sir Andrew told me that I would be met at the airport upon

arrival at Heathrow.

MR. CONAWAY: How did that work out? I mean, just some guy with a sign up says David Kramer?

MR. KRAMER: So upon arrival, I received a text message -- upon arrival in London at the airport, I received a text message from Mr. Steele saying --

MR. CONAWAY: How did Steele get your --

MR. KRAMER: From Sir Andrew.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay.

MR. KRAMER: And upon arrival, I received a text message saying: I'm in a blue jacket holding a Financial Times. In London, I figured there might be a few people holding a Financial Times, but nevertheless, I found him.

MR. CONAWAY: A blue jacket, okay. All right. So he's reverted back to his MI6 days of clandestine meetings, huh?

MR. KRAMER: Having worked at the State Department, I was not in the Intel Community myself, so it was a little odd. But we found each other.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. So describe -- you said he said baggage claim or inside the security? Still at the airport? Where were you?

MR. KRAMER: I came out of passport and customs because I didn't have any baggage to check. And so he met me there and then we proceeded to drive to his home.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. Did you know for sure it was Steele? Had you seen a picture of him before?

MR. KRAMER: I had not, no.

MR. CONAWAY: Did you check any ID?

MR. SCHIFF: If he wanted to disguise himself, he would have worn a tweed

coat, and there would have been no finding him.

MR. CONAWAY: With patches on the elbow.

MR. KRAMER: Well, wait a minute.

MR. CONAWAY: So you assumed it was Steele?

MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MR. CONAWAY: And you get in the car with this guy.

MR. KRAMER: I was hoping it was Steele, yes. It was a little odd, I have to admit.

MR. CONAWAY: Well, okay. It sounds even better when she's going to read it back at some point in time into the record.

So okay. Go ahead. You get in the car with this guy.

MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MR. CONAWAY: His car? He had a driver? He's driving

MR. KRAMER: His car. Nope. He drove. It was in the front passenger seat. Drove to his home. I couldn't tell you where it is because I don't know London that well, but outside of London and probably about a 30, 40-minute drive.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. From Heathrow?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

And then he -- I took a shower because I had flown overnight. And then we sat down in his home, where he explained to me how he had come upon producing this report and then gave me the opportunity to read it while I was there. He did not give me a copy of the report. He asked me to obtain it here in Washington, which is what I did.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. So before we get to that part --

MR. KRAMER: Sure.

MR. CONAWAY: -- walk us through your best recollection of what Steele told you as to how he came by the job, the report, whatever.

MR. KRAMER: He explained to me that this had started initially as a Republican-sponsored initiative to research on Donald Trump. It then changed into a Democratic-supported -- -funded initiative, and he did not tell me who those individuals were.

MR. CONAWAY: Either the Republicans or the Democrats?

MR. KRAMER: Correct. Yes, sir.

And he said that he started working on this in the summer of 2016, that he relied on sources that he had --

MR. CONAWAY: He specifically said summer of 2016?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. Yes, sir. That he started working on it.

MR. CONAWAY: Right.

MR. KRAMER: That he was engaged to do it.

And that he relied on some sources -- I don't know if all the sources, but some sources that he had worked with in the past, and in the process of doing so found information that came back to him that he then produced into these reports that have been released that suggested compromising material on Mr. Trump and collusive activities on the part of the campaign and the Russians.

And the reports were produced over a period from, I believe, the end of June 2016 up until December 2016.

He explained that he continued to do work in this area even after the payments that he was receiving ended.

He'd also told me that he had been in touch with an FBI contact whom he knew from before, who, I believe, was based [REDACTED] if memory serves. And I think

he had contacted that individual in July 2016, I believe. And so there had been some contact that he had through this person with the FBI.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did you say FBI contact? Was that the word?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. Yes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: Did he give you that guy's name?

MR. KRAMER: He did not.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. Why do you think he told you about the FBI contact at this point of his narrative?

MR. KRAMER: I think he was trying to give me as full a picture as possible on what he had done up until that point to then explain to me why he thought it was important for Senator McCain to get engaged.

And his explanation was that the contact with the FBI, I think, continued from July up until, I would say, roughly September, October of that year, 2016, but then it sort of came to a stop. And so his concern was that the FBI was not taking the same approach that it had when he initially broached this with them.

MR. CONAWAY: So you said you did read those reports?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. How long were you there overall?

MR. KRAMER: I would say we were there in the morning for 4 hours. We then went to a local pub, had lunch, and then briefly returned to his place. And then he brought me back to the airport.

MR. CONAWAY: To the airport?

MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MR. CONAWAY: So you read all of the reports. You remember the date of the last one you read?

MR. KRAMER: At that time, it would have been mid-November 2016. So there was a final report that I obtained after having seen him that was dated in December.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. So he takes you back to the airport and you come back to the United States.

Why would he not just give you a copy? Were you reading electronically or did he have a hard copy?

MR. KRAMER: Hard copy.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. So any reason why he wouldn't just hand you that one?

MR. KRAMER: It was not entirely clear to me. I don't think it had anything to do with trust in my handling it. I think it was just --

MR. CONAWAY: His fingerprints were on it, and he didn't want you to have one with his fingerprints on it?

MR. KRAMER: I don't know that that was the case. Maybe he just didn't want me carrying it in my handbag back from London.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. So you come back to the United States. What happened next?

MR. KRAMER: He arranged for me to meet with Glenn Simpson, which I did, on November 29, so the day after I returned from London.

MR. CONAWAY: Where was that meeting?

MR. KRAMER: At Mr. Simpson's office.

MR. CONAWAY: Where?

MR. KRAMER: In Dupont Circle. I forget the exact --

MR. CONAWAY: Here in D.C.?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. Yeah. And so Mr. Simpson gave me a copy of what I had read in London and explained to me that they had been working together. It was not clear entirely to me the relationship between Fusion, Mr. Simpson's firm, and Orbis, Mr. Steele's firm, but that they had been doing work together in compiling this.

MR. CONAWAY: So no indication that Fusion was paying Steele for this information?

MR. KRAMER: I was not aware of it at that time, no. Correct.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. And so you get a copy of it, I guess, a hard copy, a physical?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: So what did you do next?

MR. KRAMER: I then contacted Mr. Brose in Senator McCain's office to set up a meeting with the senator, which I had the next day, November 30.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Walk us through that.

MR. KRAMER: Sure. So I went to Senator McCain's office, gave him a copy of the report.

MR. CONAWAY: Did you keep a copy?

MR. KRAMER: I did.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. And why did you decide to keep a copy?

MR. KRAMER: I don't know. I think it was just sort of out of instinct perhaps more than anything.

MR. CONAWAY: So you gave him a copy?

MR. KRAMER: Gave him a copy. He took some time to read it, not completely. And he asked me what I thought he should do. And I suggested that

he bring a copy of it to the Director of the FBI and the Director of the CIA.

MR. CONAWAY: So who was in your meeting with McCain, just you and he and Chris?

MR. KRAMER: And Chris Brose, correct.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. No one else?

MR. KRAMER: Correct.

MR. CONAWAY: And that was in McCain's office here on the Hill?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. November 30?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. And then what happened?

MR. KRAMER: So I left and found out through Mr. Brose that the senator did, in fact, meet with Director Comey on December 9 and gave him a copy of it.

MR. CONAWAY: All right.

MR. KRAMER: From what Mr. Brose told me, the senator did this meeting one on one and had not provided Mr. Brose with any readout other than he had met with Mr. Comey.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. So did you know Chris before?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir. I worked with him on policy planning at the State Department.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. So what happens after the 9th? When did Chris tell you that the senator met with Comey on the 9th?

MR. KRAMER: It may have been that day.

MR. CONAWAY: The day of the meeting, you think?

MR. KRAMER: I believe so, yes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: He called you? You called him?

MR. KRAMER: I don't recall.

MR. CONAWAY: Do you all talk to each other from time to time?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. Yeah.

MR. CONAWAY: And so you were trying to follow up, I guess, to see what had gone on?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. Yes. Mr. Steele was interested in whether the senator had met with Mr. Comey.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. So how did Steele express that interest to you?

MR. KRAMER: By asking me repeatedly since I met him whether anything had happened with the report.

MR. CONAWAY: Through text messages or on the phone or what?

MR. KRAMER: It was on the phone mostly.

MR. CONAWAY: He would just call you and say what had you done?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. Or, you know, did I have any news.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. And then you would follow up with Chris?

MR. KRAMER: Exactly.

MR. CONAWAY: So after the 9th, what happened? So Steele calls you that day? You call him? What did you do?

MR. KRAMER: I informed him, contacted him to let him know --

MR. CONAWAY: Steele?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, Mr. Steele. That Senator McCain had, in fact, met with Director Comey, that I had no further readout on Director Comey's reaction to it, that it was a one-on-one meeting between the senator and the Director.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. And what was Steele's reaction?

MR. KRAMER: He was pleased that the senator had done that. Not much reaction beyond that that I recall.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. And what contact have you had with Steele since then?

MR. KRAMER: My last contact with him was in late February or early March. I have not been in touch with him since.

MR. CONAWAY: And who triggered that? Did Steele call you? You call him?

MR. KRAMER: He and I were in touch fairly regularly by phone. He was trying to get a sense from me on what was happening with it, if I was hearing anything. And then, when the document was released, I was also in touch with him. I was concerned about his safety particularly.

MR. CONAWAY: Why?

MR. KRAMER: Because I feared that after the Wall Street Journal named him that he would be at risk.

MR. CONAWAY: Risk from whom?

MR. KRAMER: The Russians or anyone else who would have had a concern about the release of the document, but mostly from the Russians, was my concern.

MR. CONAWAY: So --

MR. KRAMER: And I contacted the Wall Street Journal. I received word that the Journal was going to publish his name, and I spoke to two editors there and asked them about it.

MR. CONAWAY: So how would they know -- how would the Wall Street Journal or you get word? How did they know you were involved in any of this?

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MR. KRAMER: A reporter whom I've known for many years --

MR. CONAWAY: From the Wall Street Journal?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir. And Steele --

MR. CONAWAY: And Simpson told him. I mean, you're kind of an odd player for the Wall Street Journal to reach out to, some guy who all you've done is -- I mean, how did you become aware -- how did the reporters become aware of you, your role?

MR. KRAMER: There were reporters who found out, not from me initially, that I had given the document to Senator McCain. So I had heard from Mother Jones, the Guardian, ABC News.

MR. CONAWAY: One of the worst kept secrets around.

MR. KRAMER: It was not a best kept secret, that's for sure. And they contacted me, having heard -- I don't know from whom -- that I had given it to Senator McCain.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. So Steele's reaction after being named, what was his reaction? Was he fearful or was he just afraid --

MR. KRAMER: Yes, he was. He went into hiding.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. When you were talking to him in December, after he talked to Comey, did Steele have some expectation that this wouldn't go public?

MR. KRAMER: No. No. I think he expected that it would come out in one form or another. I don't think he anticipated the exact way it did come out. But he was also hoping that his name would not be released. He was not interested in being the target of attention that way.

MR. CONAWAY: So a guy that worked for --

MR. KRAMER: That may have been unrealistic, but that was --

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MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Well, that's what I was going to say. A guy that worked at MI-6 as long as he did, to have any expectation of privacy once he's done, that was just odd that he would think that would be the case.

MR. KRAMER: I understand that.

MR. CONAWAY: And then you said your last contact was in February?

MR. KRAMER: Late February or early March, yes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: And nothing since?

MR. KRAMER: Correct.

MR. CONAWAY: All right.

Tom.

MR. ROONEY: I'm good.

MR. CONAWAY: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] again. Thanks for coming in.

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

[REDACTED] Just a few followup questions, sir. Sort of take them in reverse chronological order.

Since the publication of the Steele dossier in BuzzFeed -- by the way, do you know who gave the copy of the dossier to BuzzFeed?

MR. ROBBINS: So let me say one thing before Mr. Kramer answers that question.

As you may know, there are lawsuits that have been filed, civil lawsuits, alleging, among other things, libel and libel-like claims on the part of people who allege that they were somehow injured by the publication by BuzzFeed.

It is my profound hope that Mr. Kramer not become embroiled in that litigation for any number of reasons, including that he shouldn't be.

And so while he can answer that question and has responsive information to provide, I would ask that you consider whether, given these parallel lawsuits that are out there, that's something you really need an answer to.

██████████ We can definitely appreciate that. And as you know, this is in a closed-door setting, and the transcript will remain executive session material.

MR. ROBBINS: Yeah, I understand that. But I also understand that Washington is a place where people have occasion to talk from time to time. And my goal is to facilitate as much information as you need, while at the same time trying to keep Mr. Kramer out of harm's way as best I can.

So, again, while he has information responsive to your question, and we don't intend to, you know -- I'm not being coy -- I would ask you to consider whether you need an answer to the question you just asked.

If you insist that you do, he will answer it.

MR. CONAWAY: Well, we have several lines of inquiry going on, and that would be helpful to our investigation, to have you answer that question. And we'll endeavor -- based on everything that's happened over the last several weeks, this is a pretty hollow statement -- but we'll endeavor to honor the confidentiality that's associated with this interview.

MR. ROBBINS: Okay.

MR. CONAWAY: And we'll do the best we can. There's a limited number of people in the room that would out your client. None of us have an interest in doing that.

MR. ROBBINS: Right.

MR. CONAWAY: So we would like an answer to the question, if we could.

MR. ROBBINS: Okay.

MR. KRAMER: Could you repeat the question?

BY [REDACTED]

Q Of course. I was taking in reverse chronological order and we were talking about BuzzFeed. And I asked if you knew who provided a copy of the Steele dossier to BuzzFeed.

A I met with Ken Bensinger of BuzzFeed at Mr. Steele's request. He contacted me around Christmas of December 2016, explained that he had worked with BuzzFeed in the past when Orbis, Mr. Steele's firm, had done work on the FIFA investigation, found them to be a reputable outlet to work with, and said that Mr. Kenzinger -- Bensinger, sorry -- Bensinger had contacted Mr. Steele or tried to reach Mr. Steele and asked -- Mr. Steele asked me, can I give Ken Bensinger your contact information?

Q Okay. So Ken Bensinger -- sorry, I'm not familiar with that name --

A Yeah.

Q -- he's a --

A He's a reporter with BuzzFeed based, I think, in L.A.

Q And so, just so I have the order correct, Christopher Steele asked you in December of 2016 --

A 2016.

Q -- to contact Ken Bensinger?

A If he, Mr. Steele, could give Ken Bensinger my contact information for Mr. Bensinger to contact.

Q Oh, I see. Okay. So Mr. Steele contacts you saying, hey, I know this guy at BuzzFeed, Ken Bensinger.

A Yes.

Q Can I give him you, Mr. Kramer's, contact information to Mr. Bensinger?

A Yes. Right.

Q And that happened in December 2016?

A Yes, sir.

Q What happened next? Did Ken Bensinger call you?

A Yes.

Q Email you? What did he say when he --

A He called me and asked if he could come meet me, which he did.

Q In?

A December 29, 2016.

Q Where?

A In Washington.

Q In D.C.

So Ken Bensinger from BuzzFeed meets you on December 29 in Washington, D.C. What happens at that meeting?

A He came to my office. McCain Institute was closed that week, but I was there. Came to my office. He had asked me before if he could see the document, and I did show him the document.

He asked if he could take photos or images of it with his iPhone, and I asked him not to do that. I said -- this may reflect my own lack of technological savvy -- but I said, I worry that things on an iPhone can go places where you don't necessarily anticipate, either intentionally or not.

But he asked if he could read it, and he said he is a slow reader. And I said that's fine. And I left the room. I went to the bathroom, I made a phone call, went

back to my office to give him time to read it. And my assumption is that during that time he took photos of the document against my request not to do so.

Q So can you ballpark approximately how long Mr. Bensinger was left alone in the room with the document?

A I'd say 20, 25 minutes or so, 30 minutes maybe.

Q And so we have an understanding of it, the document that he was left in the room -- well, let me ask it this way. Have you seen the dossier that BuzzFeed published in January?

A Yes.

Q Is it the same document that you had in your office --

A Yes.

Q -- that Mr. Bensinger was looking at?

A Yes.

Q Is there any material differences between those two documents as best you can tell?

A When I compare the two, I think there are three places that BuzzFeed wound up redacting some information. If memory serves, and forgive me if this is not exactly right, I believe it's a place on page 2 and a place on page 30 and 31. I don't think it's terribly relevant, I think it was just something BuzzFeed did on its own. But otherwise it's the same document.

Q Okay. And do you have -- do you still have a copy of the document you showed to Mr. Bensinger?

A I don't have that version of it. I have one that's not marked up.

Q Would you provide the committee with a copy of that?

A Yes.

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Q Through your lawyer.

MR. ROBBINS: Yeah. I mean, I think you'll find it's probably one you have 500 copies of, but he can give you the 501st, if you'd like.

██████████ Thanks.

MR. CONAWAY: His is apparently the closest to Glenn Simpson's we've gotten, so we appreciate that one.

BY ██████████

Q Was your understanding, Mr. Kramer, that the purpose of you meeting Mr. Bensinger was that Steele wanted you to show him the work that he, Christopher Steele, had done?

A Mr. Steele didn't indicate one way or the other to show or not to show, but it's a little hard for me to imagine talking to somebody about it without actually showing them the document.

Q Fair enough.

Did Mr. Steele indicate to you what prompted him to set up this meeting between you and Mr. Bensinger with the dossier?

A I believe Mr. Bensinger tried -- either contacted or tried to contact Mr. Steele, having heard about the existence of it.

Q Do you know if Mr. Steele and Mr. Bensinger knew each other or --

A Yes. As I -- sorry. Let me be -- I don't know if Mr. Steele and Mr. Bensinger knew each other. I believe they did. But Mr. Steele had told me that he had worked with BuzzFeed in the past on the FIFA investigation that Mr. Steele had worked on, his firm had worked on. But I can't say for certain whether Mr. Bensinger was part of that or not.

But he, Mr. Steele, vouched BuzzFeed's bona fides as an outlet that could be

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trusted in terms of past experience with his firm.

Q So that happened on December 29 and the BuzzFeed publication is January --

A 10th.

Q -- 10th of 2017?

A Yes, sir.

Q In between that time period, between December 29 and January 10, did you have any contact with Christopher Steele or Mr. Bensinger about the dossier?

A With Mr. Steele I did. With Mr. Bensinger, I did not.

Q What were your communications with Mr. Steele about?

A It was mostly just trying to get a sense of what was happening with anything I was hearing in Washington.

Q Did you know if Mr. Steele had any contacts at the FBI or the Department of Justice?

MR. ROBBINS: Apart from what he's already told you?

BY [REDACTED]

Q Apart from what you've already testified to.

A Contacts with the FBI or Department of Justice, no, not to my knowledge.

Q Okay. Do you know if Glenn Simpson and Fusion GPS had any contacts with the FBI or Department of Justice?

A I'm not aware of any.

Q Did you ever have any subsequent meetings -- I know you indicated you met one time with Glenn Simpson in his office here in Washington, D.C. Did

you have any subsequent meetings with him?

A I did. There was a -- I met him, I think, two, possibly three more times, and the one most relevant is when he gave me the final memo.

So when I received the report initially from Mr. Simpson on November 29, there was not yet the final two pages of the memo that appeared when BuzzFeed posted it. And so I met Mr. Simpson, I would guess, around December 15, 16, somewhere in there, where he gave me the final two pages.

Q Okay. Did you meet him or talk to him anytime thereafter?

A I was in touch with him mostly the same as with Mr. Steele, just trying to get a -- he was trying to get a sense from me or I was trying to get a sense from him on any movement or what was happening with it.

Q What did you think their goal was, their goal being Mr. Steele and Mr. Simpson's goal was with this document?

A I think the goal was that they were alarmed by what they uncovered, and that they felt it needed to be investigated in a serious way. Mr. Steele said to me numerous times the need to verify it or to refute it, if it was inaccurate.

It was information that he received and he then produced in these reports to the best of his ability. But they -- and I think it explains why Mr. Steele said he continued to work on it even after payment to his firm ended, that he was alarmed by what he was finding and wanted to continue to get to the bottom of it as best he could.

Q So Mr. Steele stated to you that there was a need to verify the contents of the dossier?

A Yes, sir.

Q Did Mr. Steele express any specific concern with any facts in the

dossier that he deemed needed to be verified to you?

A He felt the whole thing needed to be verified. I think there may have been different levels of confidence in various parts of it that he had. But it was to some degree raw intelligence that he was providing based on what he had picked up.

And if I could, sir.

Q Yes, please.

A You know, he stressed the need to verify it. I did that with Mr. Bensinger as well, and I did it with some other reporters.

So, sir, you asked me about the Wall Street Journal. The reporter I knew there I gave a copy to because I felt I could trust him.

MR. CONAWAY: What was the date of that? What date did you give the Wall Street Journal --

MR. KRAMER: I don't remember the exact date. It was -- it would have been in December sometime.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Before the BuzzFeed?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir. Yes.

And there were several other reporters, some who contacted me and -- there were two -- so there were two reporters Mr. Steele asked me to meet with, and Ken Bensinger was one of them. And there were a few other reporters whom I talked to. But even those who had already seen it, I stressed to them the need to verify it, because I was in no position to vouch for its veracity on my own.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Thank you. That was my next question.

Have you personally been able to verify any of the material that appeared in

the Steele dossier?

A No, nor have I tried to.

Q Okay. Do you know if -- or has Christopher Steele reached out to you through the entire time that you've known him to say, "I have been able to verify X or I've been able to verify Y in my dossier"?

A I believe the only time on specific information that was in there that he followed up, I think he believes that there was incorrect information about Michael Cohen's father that was described in one of the reports. I can't remember the exact wording there, but I think what was described in that report he felt turned out not to have been accurate.

Q So he, Christopher Steele, told you some of the reporting that he had produced regarding Michael Cohen was inaccurate?

A As it related to Mr. Cohen's father, the description of Mr. Cohen's father.

Q But Mr. Steele maintained the position with you that the contents of the dossier at a whole needed to be verified still?

A Yes, sir.

Q And that was the position you maintained through to whomever you discussed this dossier with?

A 100 percent and repeatedly.

Q And as best as you know, that remains Mr. Steele's position today, that the --

A Having not spoken to him since late February, early March, I can't say what his position is today.

Q So up until the last time you had a communication with Mr. Steele in

late February or early March of 2017, his -- Steele's position was the dossier remained unverified?

A He put forward what he thought was the best material and information he had based on the sources he had. He was not simply making things up. So based on what he produced, he had a degree of confidence in what was written down.

Could he vouch for it 100 percent? No. But he was -- he stressed to me several times, including when I met him in person, and I only met him in person once, that his company did not tailor things to produce material that the client wanted. He produced material that he found out whether the client wanted to hear it or not.

So he stressed to me that his company would go out of business if it was ever discovered that he and Orbis were tailoring things just to produce things that a client wanted.

So he was producing the material best he could, based on the sources he had, the level of confidence he had in them, and -- but was not in a position to say 100 percent certainty that these -- everything in there was accurate.

Q Do you know if -- or do you know anything about Steele's sources or subsources?

MR. ROBBINS: Okay. So this is another place where I need to intervene. Mr. Kramer has responsive information to that question, but for a variety of reasons that I would hope I don't need to elaborate, he is not going to provide source -- the names of sources.

██████████ Mr. Chairman, I think that's relevant to our investigation.

MR. CONAWAY: So what's the basis for saying no to our request?

MR. ROBBINS: The basis is that providing that information, in our view, creates danger for the witness and that the danger -- and that it outweighs any competing obligations that we think we have.

MR. KRAMER: And if I could just add, Mr. Chairman, I think it would put any sources I would name in danger as well. There have been people suspected, whether they are or not, one of whom was found dead in the back of a car in late December 2016. Several others have been arrested.

I cannot myself put names forward when I'm not in a position myself to know for certain whether they, in fact, played a role or not in this.

I understand the need or interest, but --

MR. CONAWAY: Well, are you asserting lawyer privilege? Are you a lawyer?

MR. KRAMER: I'm not.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Are you asserting that you're a news agency and that this source is protected under some First Amendment thing?

MR. KRAMER: I'm not.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. While not insensitive to fears, you know, lots of folks are asked from time to time to put themselves in harm's way, so to speak, and we're going to insist that you answer the question. I mean, unless there's a legal basis for it, how do I let you off the hook just because -- heartfelt that your life is in danger -- but I just am not persuaded.

MR. ROBBINS: Well, we're not going to assert frivolous objections, so I'm not going to pretend that there's an attorney-client privilege or some other privilege of that kind.

The witness is here voluntarily to provide information. I think he's doing an

admirably thorough job in responding to these questions. There's now a question that he believes, with ample support, will put his and other people's lives in danger.

MR. CONAWAY: So help us understand the ample support. I don't know what that means.

MR. ROBBINS: Well, you're interviewing a guy who has been hacked by Russians, who spent 8 --

MR. CONAWAY: That doesn't narrow it down. That is half the world.

MR. ROBBINS: Well, it doesn't include me.

MR. CONAWAY: That you know of.

MR. ROBBINS: That's right. But who has spent 8 years in a position which has exposed -- which has given him a more than good faith basis to believe that his concern for people's lives is well grounded. And --

MR. CONAWAY: We all have concern for people's lives. That's, again, not part of the --

MR. ROBBINS: Well, I understand --

MR. SCHIFF: If I could interject, gentlemen.

Chairman, I think you and I should probably discuss this offline. We had the same issue come up with Erik Prince, and he was permitted, with the intercession of the majority, not to answer the questions about specific individuals. And he was informed that he's here on a voluntary basis. And that has been -- there have been several witnesses --

MR. CONAWAY: Yeah. Yep. So your client is here on a voluntary basis.

MR. ROBBINS: Yes, he is.

MR. CONAWAY: So under that regard, that means he can or cannot -- he may or may not answer the question.

Now, that doesn't mean that we may not at a subsequent point try to compel your witness, your client --

MR. ROBBINS: Yes. Yes, Congressman --

MR. CONAWAY: But in order to get this thing moving, I understand you don't want to do that, but we'll move forward.

MR. ROBBINS: Well, I've advised him that there is a risk that failing to answer that question would elicit a subpoena from the committee. I understand that's a risk. Among the risks that he faces and that others face with this particular pending question, that's a subsidiary risk, in our view.

MR. SCHIFF: And, Mr. Chairman, I just want to be clear, I'm not suggesting that I wouldn't support a subpoena. I'm just suggesting you and I talk about it so that we have some consistency about how we handle these situations.

MR. CONAWAY: Yeah. So thank you. We'll move forward.

██████ is our time up?

██████ Yeah, just a couple minutes, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: The minority is recognized for 15 minutes, and we will revisit the subject.

██████ I just have a couple of --

MR. CONAWAY: Oh, I thought you said you were through.

██████ No, just a couple minutes.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay.

BY ██████

Q You had mentioned that Steele had asked you to meet with two reporters. You've told us the one. Can you tell us the other?

A Carl Bernstein.

Q Who is that?

A From Bernstein and Woodward fame, of course.

Q I know.

A But he, I believe, had connections both to CNN and Vanity Fair.

Q And when did you reach out to Mr. Bernstein?

A He reached out to me.

Q Mr. Bernstein?

A Again, it was Mr. Steele asking if he could put Bernstein in touch with me. And so I met him, I believe, the first time was early January.

Q Of? Sorry.

A Of 2017.

Q Okay. And did you have similar conversations with Mr. Bernstein --

A Yes.

Q -- that you had with Mr. Bensinger?

A Mr. Bensinger. Yes, sir.

Q And did you ever provide Mr. Bernstein with a copy of the Steele dossier?

A I did, yes.

Q Same time, January 2017?

A Yes. And the same caveats that I stressed, which is that this needed to be verified. It couldn't be published.

I also mentioned that Peter Stone, who does work for McClatchy also, whom I had talked to for quite a period of time before I was aware of the existence of this document, also contacted me. He was someone I felt I could trust, and I gave a copy to. At one point in early January he asked me if he could quote from it without

naming anyone, and I said no. And he respected that.

Q And then, last question, I know you said you haven't had a communication with Mr. Steele since February, March of 2017.

A Right.

Q Has anyone -- have you had any sort of communications that went through another individual, i.e., Glenn Simpson or something like that?

A No. No. I did see Sir Andrew Wood again this year at Halifax, which was November 17, 18, 19, I believe. But we didn't have any substantive conversation.

Q You and Mr. Wood did not talk about Christopher Steele or any of the other --

A No. He -- I mean, we had been in email touch on other things. We'd been in email touch for 5, 6, 7 years on various things. He's a close follower of Russia. He and two other people and I are in frequent email touch but not about this.

Q Thanks very much, sir. Appreciate your time.

A Thank you.

██████████ Over to the minority.

MR. CONAWAY: Mr. Quigley, 45 minutes.

MR. QUIGLEY: Thank you, sir. Thank you for being here.

Let me do a followup question and go back to the beginning.

So the last time you communicated with Mr. Steele, was it your understanding he was still working at that point in time on the dossier?

MR. KRAMER: I don't believe so, sir. I think he, once his name came out, published by the Journal initially, I think his ability to continue working on this was

very limited. So --

MR. QUIGLEY: So your guess is he probably -- given that timeframe, that probably would have been when that he would have --

MR. KRAMER: His name was outed by the Journal, I believe, January 11 of this year.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. So it's your belief that he probably would have stopped around that time?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, I believe so, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay.

Now I want to give you an opportunity, because it will matter, to expound upon your credentials, particularly as it relates to Russia, Mr. Putin, and Russian intelligence.

Could you elaborate a little bit on your background, your expertise, on how you know what you know about how this operates?

MR. KRAMER: Sure. I have a -- I don't want to go all the way back, but a BA --

MR. QUIGLEY: Go back to what's relevant.

MR. KRAMER: -- BA in Soviet studies, a master's in Soviet studies, which also gives you an idea of how old I am. The Soviet Union was still around at the time. So I've been following Soviet Union/Russia for over 30 years, and I've done it professionally as well.

MR. QUIGLEY: In what capacity?

MR. KRAMER: In 1993 I was hired to be the assistant director at the -- of the Russia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS. I was there for a year. Then I went to the Carnegie Endowment for 5-1/2 years,

where I had a similar position helping to run the Russia, Eurasia program. I helped get the Moscow Center of the Carnegie Endowment launched.

Traveled to the region many, many times. My Russian has gotten rusty, but I used to know Russian quite well.

And then was brought into the Bush administration where I worked all 8 years. And in several of those positions -- I held four different positions.

I was the senior adviser to the under secretary for global affairs, where I worked on Russia-related issues.

I was the professional staff member on the policy planning staff dealing with Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia.

Then I was the deputy assistant secretary for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova from July 2005 until March 2008, where I had direct responsibility for U.S.-Russian relations.

And assistant secretary for democracy, human rights, and labor at the end.

And then at the German Marshall Fund, I continued to focus on Russia and Eurasia. Maintained an interest at Freedom House. I was a strong advocate of the Magnitsky legislation that the Congress passed, working closely with Bill Browder. And then at the McCain Institute I maintained this interest.

And I have written dozens, maybe over 100 articles on Russia and Ukraine and Eurasia, and came out with a book last August, this past August of 2017, called "Back to Containment: Dealing With Putin's Regime."

MR. QUIGLEY: And would this extensive background include information about Russian intelligence and how they operate?

MR. KRAMER: When I was the deputy assistant secretary at the State Department, I was the point of contact for the FBI and the CIA dealing with

counterintelligence.

MR. QUIGLEY: And this background would also include understanding what we've come to know is the Kremlin playbook and how they operate in dealing with their adversaries using intelligence?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: Could you elaborate just a little bit on your understanding of the Kremlin playbook and how they operate?

MR. KRAMER: It operates on many different levels, but one is to look at weak links, to find ways of infiltrating into either individuals, organizations that might be receptive to Russian overtures.

Their embassy here and their various consulates have been very active over the years in reaching out to individuals. They use their facilities to keep tabs on what's happening in this country. They are not shy about approaching individuals. And they certainly keep tabs on people who will travel to the region, not just to Russia but Russia as well.

And I will say that it was, based on my understanding of Russian behavior and actions, that lent a sense of credibility to the document that was produced. And it's not to say that what the document describes is 100 percent accurate, but it seemed consistent to me with how Russian FSB, GRU, and others operate.

MR. QUIGLEY: And just a little bit more. Your understanding of how they used what you describe as Kompromat or --

MR. KRAMER: Yeah.

MR. QUIGLEY: -- hacking, dumping, extortion. If you could elaborate.

MR. KRAMER: They would always look for opportunities to put people in compromising positions to use at the right moment or never use. Kompromat is

best never used. If it exists and the person who was compromised knows it's there, it's best never used, because once it's used it's a spent force.

But they will offer people money. They will offer people companions, if you will. And they will try to get all of that on tape or film or whatever it is that they're using.

MR. QUIGLEY: Is it only political leaders they would do this with?

MR. KRAMER: No.

MR. QUIGLEY: Would they do it with any other --

MR. KRAMER: No. It would be prominent people. It's not to suggest that they're so prescient that they know who the next President of the United States might be. But prominent figures, whether they're politicians or academics even, academics who might take a critical view of the Kremlin, business people, they would all be of interest.

It's a terribly corrupt system. It's a kleptocratic system. And the way they feel they can get us is by trying to corrupt us as well and trying to get us in compromising situations.

MR. QUIGLEY: Let me go back, if I can, for a minute for the Halifax conference and the conversation. I believe you said it was yourself, Sir Andrew --

MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MR. QUIGLEY: -- Senator McCain, and Mr. Brose?

MR. KRAMER: Brose, B-r-o-s-e, yeah.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. And before you had a conversation, as you said, on the periphery of this conference?

MR. KRAMER: Uh-huh.

MR. QUIGLEY: And how long did that conversation last again?

MR. KRAMER: I would say maybe 15 minutes.

MR. QUIGLEY: And did Sir Andrew talk in detail about what was in this research document or did he just reference it?

MR. KRAMER: He didn't describe in detail because he had not seen it himself. And he described what had been described to him, which was that there was indications of a video that existed that he had not seen. And --

MR. QUIGLEY: What did he say exactly?

MR. KRAMER: That there was a video -- that he had heard that there's a video that exists showing Mr. Trump with prostitutes in the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. What else did he say?

MR. KRAMER: That there were indications of possible collusion between people in the Trump campaign and the Russians.

MR. QUIGLEY: Is that all he said, or did he give any examples or details?

MR. KRAMER: I don't think he gave any examples and details, since he had not seen the document himself.

MR. QUIGLEY: He didn't hand you any documents?

MR. KRAMER: There was nothing handed over. He had nothing in his physical possession.

MR. QUIGLEY: Is there anything else he mentioned about the investigation or the work --

MR. KRAMER: He vouched for Mr. Steele.

MR. QUIGLEY: How did he do that? Could you elaborate?

MR. KRAMER: Having been a diplomat for many years himself and having been the reader of some of Mr. Steele's work from when Mr. Steele was in MI6, and having been, I believe, an informal -- I don't think there's a formal -- but an

informal adviser to Mr. Steele for his Orbis company, he felt that Mr. Steele was — had impeccable credentials and a very strong record.

Mr. Steele had been at MI6 when the Litvinenko case emerged. This was Alexander Litvinenko had been poisoned with polonium, and Mr. Steele was the one who sort of put his finger on it.

So he was vouching for Mr. Steele's bona fides.

[11:00 a.m.]

MR. QUIGLEY: So he spent part of that conversation vouching for him, or did he do that in a previous conversation?

MR. KRAMER: He did it both with me separately and then again with the Senator.

MR. QUIGLEY: And, again, just to make sure, had you heard of Christopher Steele prior to that conference in Halifax?

MR. KRAMER: I had not no. No, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: So just for a moment, if you could also, to your knowledge, Sir Andrew's qualifications, could you elaborate, to the extent you knew, of his level of credibility as well?

MR. KRAMER: Ambassador to Russia I believe in the nineties, Ambassador to Yugoslavia, and -- but I only got to know him after he left and was affiliated with Chatham House. So he's contributed to a number of Chatham House publications, including what I think is probably still the best report called the Russia Challenge that Chatham House produced in the summer of 2015, I believe.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did he have any knowledge that he shared about how Mr. Steele came to be completing this investigation?

MR. KRAMER: No, not that I recall. I don't believe so.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. So, based on your knowledge of Russian intelligence methods, did you believe at that time, based on the conversation you had, that Mr. Trump could be the subject of kompromat?

MR. KRAMER: I was in no position to know one way or the other, but was alarmed at the possibility, but couldn't really come to any judgments beyond that.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did you or anyone else, to your knowledge, take notes at

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that meeting?

MR. KRAMER: No.

MR. QUIGLEY: And there were no followups other than that you were going to go ahead and meet Mr. Steele?

MR. KRAMER: Correct.

MR. QUIGLEY: To your knowledge, did Senator McCain have any followup discussions with Sir Andrew?

MR. KRAMER: No.

MR. QUIGLEY: Are you familiar with an individual named Rinat Akhmetshin?

MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MR. QUIGLEY: Are you aware that Mr. Akhmetshin, a lobbyist who attended the 2016 meeting in Trump Tower with Donald Trump, Jared Kushner, Paul Manafort and a Russian lawyer, also attended that Halifax forum?

MR. KRAMER: I became aware of it after the fact. I don't know Mr. Akhmetshin personally. I had not spoken or met with him. And learned about it this past summer when reports indicated he had been there.

MR. QUIGLEY: So that's the limit of your communication, you've never met him or talked with him?

MR. KRAMER: To the best of my knowledge, I've never met him.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay.

MR. KRAMER: You know, in Halifax there are 300 people there. You have conversations on the side. It's possible during one of those that he was there, but I doubt it. He seems to have hair that I would have remembered. Sorry, Larry.

MR. ROBBINS: I like to think that I have hair that people remember as well.

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Perhaps not.

MR. QUIGLEY: We're going to show you exhibit I guess marked 1, if that's okay.

[Kramer Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

MR. QUIGLEY: This is 502 and 503. I'm just kidding. Do you want to take a minute to familiarize.

MR. ROBBINS: Just give us one second.

MR. QUIGLEY: Sure. No, take your time.

MR. CONAWAY: Mike, are there Bates stamps on this? Is this --

MR. QUIGLEY: I don't --

MR. CONAWAY: Who produced this?

MS. COHEN: This is the BuzzFeed version of the dossier.

MR. CONAWAY: I'm sorry, what?

MR. QUIGLEY: Of the dossier.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. It's not something he produced?

MR. QUIGLEY: No.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay, got you.

MR. QUIGLEY: I wanted you to have this because I assume at some point soon we're going to reference it.

Did Mr. Steele indicate that he knew you had a previous discussion? He was aware of that discussion you had in Halifax?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. Did he set any limitations or conditions on your meeting with him?

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MR. KRAMER: No. He and I did not have any communication until I met him in person.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did anyone else set any limitations --

MR. KRAMER: No.

MR. QUIGLEY: -- or conditions on your meeting with him?

MR. KRAMER: No, sir. I did it in a personal capacity, just to be clear. I paid the airport fee out of my own pocket and used miles to fly to London. And I did an overnight there.

MR. QUIGLEY: Now, I want to make sure I remember. To your knowledge, at that point in time, was -- did you understand him that he knew that this was going to be passed on or possibly passed on to the FBI?

MR. KRAMER: The initial goal was to -- for me to pass this on to Senator McCain, and then for Senator McCain to do whatever he felt was appropriate with it once Senator McCain had it in his possession. And I believe Mr. Steele felt that having Senator McCain deliver it to Director Comey would give it an extra push to be taken seriously.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did you specifically talk about passing -- you know, ask -- did he ask that it be passed on --

MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MR. QUIGLEY: -- to the FBI?

MR. KRAMER: To the --

MR. QUIGLEY: I mean, was that talked about in the conversation?

MR. KRAMER: I believe so, yes. I think his hope was that Senator McCain, with his stature, would be able to give it an extra oomph in handing it to Director Comey.

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MR. QUIGLEY: Now, to your knowledge, how is the copy that we're calling I guess the BuzzFeed copy different than what he showed you?

MR. KRAMER: I think there are just three places. On page 2, there is a -- if you look at paragraph 4.

MR. QUIGLEY: A redaction.

MR. KRAMER: A redaction there in black, and I believe the same on pages 30, 31. And otherwise, to the best of my checking, it matches up.

MR. CONAWAY: How about pages 30, 31?

MR. KRAMER: The black, starting on number 4, and then the company comment I believe was blacked out by BuzzFeed. And then --

MR. CONAWAY: Thirty-four?

MR. KRAMER: Sure. So on pages 34 and 35, this is how I had received that memo. So, for example, up at number 3 on page 35, the very first part, whoever reported it, I have no idea who that is.

MR. QUIGLEY: So the copy that Mr. Steele showed you had some redactions? Make sure I got it.

MR. KRAMER: The copy that he showed me -- so, sorry. No, on the last two pages --

MR. QUIGLEY: Yeah.

MR. KRAMER: I didn't -- he didn't have that when I met him --

MR. QUIGLEY: Oh, I see.

MR. KRAMER: -- because I met him before that was produced. So I believe everything else matches up with what he had shown me.

MR. QUIGLEY: So the copy he showed you had everything else but the last two pages. Is that right?

MR. KRAMER: Correct.

MR. QUIGLEY: So it wouldn't have mattered if it was redacted or not, because you didn't have those?

MR. KRAMER: Exactly.

MR. QUIGLEY: And all other copies that you saw, you said you believe BuzzFeed redacted something else as well?

MR. KRAMER: No, just the three pages.

MR. QUIGLEY: Just the same redactions that we see here today?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, correct. And just to be clear, Mr. Simpson called me to say BuzzFeed has just posted the report. I then immediately called Ken Bensinger, and my exact words to him were, you're going to get people killed. I said, please take it down. And he said that they would take a look at it and do what they could.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. I want to refer as we're looking at this, the Vanity Fair article also mentioned you used -- you know, purchased with your flight, purchased with miles and so forth. But referencing that, it references that you operate under Moscow rules.

Is that -- do you remember this reference in the Vanity Fair article? You -- upon landing in London, you operated under Moscow rules. Had you used that term or was that just journalistic license?

MR. KRAMER: I don't know what that means.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay.

MR. KRAMER: By the way, I had told The Guardian about my airport experience with Mr. Steele. That conversation I had thought was off the record, but clearly it was not.

MR. QUIGLEY: Shocking. Gambling at Rick's.

MR. KRAMER: I've been burned a few times.

MR. QUIGLEY: Gambling at Rick's.

MR. KRAMER: One of these days I'll learn.

MR. QUIGLEY: Now, you mentioned earlier that this was raw -- he described this as raw intelligence material, correct?

MR. KRAMER: This was -- I don't know that he used the term "raw intelligence," but he said this was the information that he had received, and that it was produced in the manner reflective of what he had gotten.

MR. QUIGLEY: And you said that he had different levels of confidence about different levels of this report. Did he go into detail about what areas he had more confidence in or less confidence in?

MR. KRAMER: At that time when I met him, he did not go into detail about which areas.

MR. QUIGLEY: He didn't talk about which sources he had more confidence in --

MR. KRAMER: No.

MR. QUIGLEY: -- or less?

MR. KRAMER: No.

MR. QUIGLEY: He didn't talk about degrees of certainty about sources or information?

MR. KRAMER: Not that I recall, no.

MR. QUIGLEY: So he just spoke generally that there were varying levels of certainty?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. And then it was subsequent to my meeting him in

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person on the phone that I mentioned where he indicated to me they think they had the wrong information about Mr. Cohen's father.

MR. QUIGLEY: Were there any other specific areas of the dossier that he thought he had doubts about or were incorrect?

MR. KRAMER: He wondered whether the part about Mr. Cohen's travel to Prague, whether Prague was the right place or not. He indicated it could have been in the Czech countryside. He said it was also possible that it had been in Budapest.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did he describe to you the sources, how he came in contact with them?

MR. KRAMER: How he came in contact with them? No, he did not.

MR. QUIGLEY: He referenced that he knew some of them before?

MR. KRAMER: I believe he said that some of the sources were ones he had used in the past for other projects.

MR. QUIGLEY: He didn't specify which ones were which?

MR. KRAMER: He did not, no, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did he mention at all that his -- some of his sources had subsources?

MR. KRAMER: I don't believe so, but I couldn't swear to that. I don't think so.

MR. QUIGLEY: So the majority of the meeting you said was 4 hours, I believe, in the morning?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, roughly.

MR. QUIGLEY: How long into the meeting did he show you the dossier?

MR. KRAMER: Probably -- I took a shower, then came downstairs.

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Probably an hour, hour and a half. He was -- we were describing each other's background for the -- so actually, it was probably even later than that.

We have some mutual friends. And so we were just describing each other's background to get to know each other, since we didn't know each other before. So probably 2 hours into it. I then spent -- I'm a slow reader, so close to an hour reading it.

MR. QUIGLEY: So I asked you after the Halifax meeting how this might have fit into your understanding of how the Russians use kompromat. So after you read the dossier and, to your knowledge now, how does this fit with your knowledge of how the Russians use kompromat, kompromat toward those they are trying to influence?

MR. KRAMER: I've taken three different approaches to this. One is I believe the bona fides of Mr. Steele, which is not to say that everything he does is 100 percent accurate, but he certainly has a very good reputation. Second, the behavior and actions of the Russians seem consistent with a lot of what's described in here. And third, I was puzzled by Candidate Trump's comments about Mr. Putin and Russia.

Those three things led me to think that this needed to be taken seriously. It didn't lead me to think that this was 100 percent accurate. I've never been able to vouch for its veracity. But those three factors are why I took this seriously and why I thought it was irresponsible to ignore it.

MR. QUIGLEY: And not to assume anything, which general comments or specific comments are you referencing about Candidate Trump about Russia or Mr. Putin?

MR. KRAMER: His refusal to criticize him for anything. His comments

about lifting sanctions possibly, about recognizing Crimea. They're a fairly long list.

To put my cards on the table, I'm a never Trump Republican. I signed the two letters last year. I certainly don't hide that. That's publicly known. So I'm not a -- I did not support Mr. Trump's candidacy.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did he provide any other information other than the dossier to you?

MR. KRAMER: He Mr. Steele?

MR. QUIGLEY: Mr. Steele, yes.

MR. KRAMER: Any other information? No. I mean, this was the only material I received.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did he talk about other information that he did not include in the dossier?

MR. KRAMER: It was -- no, most of the conversation was focused on this and then what I was picking up in Washington, in terms of things I heard.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did you two talk about this as kompromat and how Russia might use it?

MR. KRAMER: A little bit. But I think we both felt that, again, putting aside the specifics here, this kind of behavior would be consistent with their actions.

MR. QUIGLEY: Just one moment. I'm going to hand it off to the ranking Democrat for a minute.

MR. SCHIFF: Thank you, Mr. Kramer, for being here. And I understand the sensitivity in terms of the sources. Our committee, like every committee, has had its problem with leaks. Mr. Conaway and I have been doing our best, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, to stop that. At the same time, we have a deep interest in being able to verify how much of the dossier is accurate, and

knowing more about the sources helps us do that.

Mr. Conaway and I will discuss this. Maybe there's a way for us to employ a Gang of Five-like approach, where there's a closer hold on that information than we have on anything else. But we'll discuss it.

And let me ask you, if you're comfortable answering this, the source information is the most pertinent or helpful to us if any of the sources are in the United States and can be brought before the committee to testify. Are you able to tell us whether any of these sources, to your knowledge, are in the United States, or are they all in Russia or outside the country?

MR. ROBBINS: Can you give us a minute?

MR. SCHIFF: Of course.

[Discussion off the record.]

MR. KRAMER: Congressman, at the moment I'm not aware of any that are in the United States.

MR. SCHIFF: You described the dossier as raw intelligence, which that's how it comes across. Did you and Mr. Steele discuss whether he was sharing this raw intelligence with MI5, with his old office?

MR. KRAMER: He had indicated that he had been in touch with his former colleagues.

MR. SCHIFF: If he had been working within the CIA and producing these reports, they would be -- they wouldn't be finished intelligence products; they would be subject to verification by the Agency?

MR. KRAMER: Correct.

MR. SCHIFF: And they would be vetted with other information within the holdings of the Agency and other agencies. Is that your understanding as well of

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what you know of how our intelligence agencies operate?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir. I think, if I had seen this -- let me put it this way: If -- when I was in the State Department, I likely would not have seen something like this from the Intelligence Community. It would have gone through that kind of vetting process before it would have reached me in a policymaking position.

MR. SCHIFF: Mr. Steele had an interest in this being presented to FBI and CIA so that those agencies could do the vetting of the information and determine how much of it was true or how much was inaccurate?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. Yes, he -- I mean, he said to me -- I believe he certainly has friends in the United States, may even have a relative or two. Having worked at MI6, believes passionately in U.S.-U.K. relations and believe in the strength of those relations and, based on what he was finding, was alarmed at what that could do to the U.S. and what it could do to U.S.-U.K. relations.

MR. SCHIFF: So he wasn't suggesting to you that the United States simply accept his sources but, rather, that this be investigated?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. SCHIFF: Now, he informed you I think that he had a relationship with the FBI or had been in contact with the FBI, a relationship that ended in September-October?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, I think -- I believe the September-October is -- I think probably closer to October, but that he had contacted the person he knew who was stationed for the FBI I believe [REDACTED] in the summer of 2016, was in touch I believe two or three times with that person, and then the contact dried up.

MR. SCHIFF: And do you know did he tell you how much of the information that would become the dossier he had provided to the FBI?

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MR. KRAMER: I don't know. I don't. I don't know.

MR. SCHIFF: Did he explain to you why if he was in contact with the FBI he was worried that the FBI -- or let me phrase it a different way.

Did he communicate that he was concerned that the FBI hadn't taken the work seriously enough, or what made him think that, notwithstanding the relationship he had with the FBI, it needed to be brought to the level of the attention of the director or a higher level?

MR. KRAMER: My impression is that he got initial interest in response from the FBI when he first presented this. They seemed interested in his pursuing it and continuing to pursue it, and then the communication rather abruptly ended. So he was worried that for whatever reason, he didn't know the reason, that they were no longer taking it seriously.

MR. SCHIFF: Now, you had suggested I think to Senator McCain that he give it to the head of the CIA and the FBI.

MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MR. SCHIFF: Had it been Mr. Steele's recommendation also that it go to the CIA?

MR. KRAMER: I don't recall that he said specifically the head of the CIA. And, frankly, that was a bit more of an on-the-spot mention by me. Senator McCain put me a little bit on the spot.

I did believe that he should give it to Director Comey. I was less certain whether the CIA would or should have a role in this, but that is what I said. I don't mean to point the finger at Senator McCain.

MR. SCHIFF: No, no.

MR. KRAMER: I mean, he asked the pertinent right question.

MR. SCHIFF: You mentioned that the one allegation that he had subsequent questions about referred to Michael Cohen's father. My colleague Mr. Swalwell pointed out that it may be the father-in-law. Do you know whether it was the father or the father-in-law? Because I think it's the father-in-law that may be discussed in the dossier.

MR. KRAMER: If you want, I can try to find it in here.

MR. SCHIFF: Sure. That would be helpful.

MR. KRAMER: Do you have that, sir?

MR. CONAWAY: Page 30 says her father.

MR. KRAMER: Page 30.

MR. CONAWAY: The fourth bullet of the summary.

MR. ROBBINS: The question is, does that refresh your recollection in any way?

MR. KRAMER: It does not. I'm sorry. My -- I think there's another place in here, and I may just be screwing up --

MR. SCHIFF: And I maybe have missed the reference to the father as well. But that's your best recollection was that he thought the information about Michael Cohen's father may have been incorrect and that the location of the Cohen meeting may not have been in Prague, it may have been in a different venue?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. SCHIFF: But he didn't raise a question about whether Michael Cohen had had the role ascribed to him in the dossier?

MR. KRAMER: He believed such a meeting took place. He just was not sure where it took place.

MR. SCHIFF: Were there -- aside from those two issues, were there other

areas of the dossier that he put a particular emphasis on in saying that he had very high confidence that something was true?

MR. KRAMER: He did believe that there was a video. He was interested in trying to obtain it. He didn't quite know how to go about doing that. But he did believe that such a video does exist.

MR. SCHIFF: And did he tell you why that he was as confident in that --

MR. KRAMER: Based on what he was hearing from his sources.

MR. SCHIFF: In the --

MR. KRAMER: Sorry. Without knowing whether such a video referenced here exists, production of videos by the Russians in compromising situations is par for the course. I mean, that's what they do.

MR. SCHIFF: Did Mr. Steele tell you about anything he did not include in the dossier or in the reports, because he didn't feel it rose to the level of confidence that he would have needed to include it?

MR. KRAMER: There was one thing he mentioned to me that is not included here, and that is he believed that Mr. Flynn had an extramarital affair with a Russian woman in the U.K. Michael Flynn, that is.

MR. SCHIFF: And in the time since the meeting that you had with Christopher Steele, many contacts between the Trump administration, transition team, et cetera, have become public. In your subsequent conversations with Mr. Steele and in light of what became public, did he have any observations about public events shedding new and additional light on what he had uncovered through his sources?

MR. KRAMER: I think the bulk of the exposure of contacts came after he and I had been in contact and after we ended our contact. It seemed clear to me

that Michael Flynn in December 2015 was in Moscow for an RT dinner, and subsequently we learned that he had been paid for that.

So right there, it seemed to both of us that there had been contact on a fairly open basis. I mean, there was nothing hidden about that. There were pictures of Mr. Cohen -- sorry, of General Flynn sitting at Mr. Putin's table.

MR. SCHIFF: From?

MR. KRAMER: December 2015.

MR. SCHIFF: When Christopher Steele asked if he could give your contact information to BuzzFeed or that you have contact with other reporters, was it for the purpose of letting the press know of these allegations so that they wouldn't effectively either be swept under the rug or ignored?

MR. KRAMER: So he and Mr. Simpson both told me that they had talked to the New York Times before they met me or knew who I was, and talked to them about some of these reports.

I subsequently became aware that other journalists who contacted me had known about this, either had it or had seen it. Those included Mother Jones, Yahoo, ABC, Washington Post. I may be leaving one or two out. Guardian. And, as I indicated, some of them contacted me had heard that I had given this to Senator McCain, and they did not hear that from me. I don't know from whom.

MR. SCHIFF: But in terms of the reasons why he wanted to put you in touch with certain reporters, was it out of a desire to make the allegations public so that they would be pursued and not ignored?

MR. KRAMER: I don't -- I think it was for the allegations to be pursued, not necessarily made public. Only made public if the allegations were verified. I don't think it was his -- in his interest to have this released as it had been by BuzzFeed.

MR. SCHIFF: So the hope was then that the journalists that this information was shared with would chase down these leads?

MR. KRAMER: Would do their own investigative work, yes, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did the two of you, Mr. Steele and yourself, talk at all about Russian money laundering?

MR. KRAMER: No, I don't think. He did mention Deutsche Bank's loans with Mr. Trump in the past, but I don't recall that there was mention of money laundering.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did he talk in any other way about the Trump finance world involved with this or --

MR. KRAMER: He thought the Deutsche Bank relationship was worth exploring.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did he describe why?

MR. KRAMER: He just felt that finances and money had something to do with this. He didn't, to me at least, explain in great detail why.

MR. QUIGLEY: Did he mention or provide information about Russians weaponizing social media campaigns at all?

MR. KRAMER: I don't think so. Not that I recall.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. As that meeting concluded, was there any agreement beyond what you've already talked about about what else the two of you would do or how you'd communicate?

MR. KRAMER: No. Just we were in touch from that meeting, so -- and nothing more agreed on after that.

MR. QUIGLEY: How much time?

██████████ Ten minutes.

MR. QUIGLEY: Eric.

MR. SWALWELL: Thank you, Mr. Kramer.

Going to page 2 of the dossier, paragraph 4, it reads: "The Moscow Ritz Carlton episode involving Trump reported above was confirmed by Source E," and then it's redacted. Is a name redacted there or a description of a person?

MR. KRAMER: To the best of my recollection, I believe it's a description, not a name.

MR. SWALWELL: And has that -- can you tell us that description?

MR. KRAMER: Off the top of my head, I can't.

MR. SWALWELL: What do you recall it being?

MR. KRAMER: I honestly don't remember, sir. I'm sorry.

MR. SWALWELL: When you talked earlier about Mr. Steele explaining to you the sources, how was it that he explained the source to you? Did he go through their names and backgrounds by the -- to correspond them with the letters that he gave them in the dossier? If you could just describe just how that was conveyed.

MR. KRAMER: There was a piece of paper that he showed me as -- before I read the report, a piece of paper with a list of names.

MR. SWALWELL: And did the names also have background or other identifying information about the source?

MR. KRAMER: Very brief identifying information.

MR. SWALWELL: Did Mr. Steele tell you whether he had met the sources in person or had talked to them on the telephone or communicated by email? Did you get a sense of how he was in contact with these sources?

MR. KRAMER: My understanding is that there was a person in between

acting as intermediary with the sources, and it was based on the material that this intermediary received that then was transmitted to Mr. Steele.

MR. SWALWELL: Do you know how many intermediaries Mr. Steele was using?

MR. KRAMER: My impression was just one, but I couldn't swear to that.

MR. SWALWELL: Do you know if that intermediary was U.K.-based or based in Russia?

MR. KRAMER: I don't know.

MR. SWALWELL: Do you know if Mr. Steele was meeting face-to-face?

MR. KRAMER: Sorry, sir, the identity of that person I don't know.

MR. SWALWELL: That was not one of the names that you had seen on that list of sources?

MR. KRAMER: Correct. Yes.

MR. SWALWELL: Do you know where Mr. Steele traveled to conduct this investigation, if anywhere?

MR. KRAMER: I don't know that he did. He may have stayed in London and I think had this intermediary act as the point of contact, I believe. That's my impression, at least.

MR. SWALWELL: And your impression was that the intermediary would travel and meet with the sources to provide information back to Mr. Steele?

MR. KRAMER: Either travel or be in touch in some other form, yes.

MR. SWALWELL: Donald Trump traveled to Russia at least four to five times publicly that we know of. The first was at the invitation of the Russian Ambassador in 1986. Just based on what conversation you had with Mr. Steele and your understanding of the Russians and the way that they work, is it possible

that Russian intelligence could have started monitoring him and compiling a file on him as far back as 1986?

MR. KRAMER: I think it's possible. I think as his persona increased, he would become of greater interest.

██████████ Five minutes.

MR. KRAMER: And, I mean, high-profile businesspeople would be of interest to the FSB and to the Security Services, and, again, not necessarily for political reasons. It could be for business reasons. They may want to try to catch someone in a compromising situation and then say, remember that payment you promised us. That would be consistent with Russian behavior. A payment that was never, in fact, promised.

MR. SWALWELL: Mr. Kramer, the dossier seems to have a deep reach into Vladimir Putin's Kremlin. Did you get a sense of how Mr. Steele was able to report back on conversations that Mr. Putin was having? For example, one was with former Ukrainian President Yanukovych.

MR. KRAMER: It was based on his sources. Beyond that I don't know, I mean, other than Mr. Steele, like me, has been following this part of the world for decades.

MR. SWALWELL: I yield back.

MR. KRAMER: Can I ask for a bathroom break, if we could?

MR. QUIGLEY: Mr. Chairman, why don't we take a break now. We can break now. It's a natural point for us, anyway.

[Recess.]

BY ██████████

Q Do you have a copy of the dossier, or part of it?

A Yes. Right now, you mean, to look at?

Q Yes.

A Yes, yes.

Q Could you just, if you could real quick, tell me which redactions are BuzzFeed redactions versus which redactions are Steele redactions. Is that possible?

A I believe -- so I'm doing this off of memory. I believe on page 2, number 4, right after Source E, I believe that's BuzzFeed's.

Q Okay.

A And then I believe on pages 30 and 31, it's the same thing. Paragraph 4 and then paragraph 6 I believe are BuzzFeed's. The redactions you see on pages 34 and 35 are the same that I received. I don't believe BuzzFeed added any redactions there.

Q Got you. The rest, is it fair to say the rest are Steele redactions?

A Yes.

Q And have you ever seen an unredacted copy for anything that Christopher Steele blocked out?

A No. This was described to me as the unredacted version.

Q Okay. Not looking to get back into the question of identity of the sources or subsources. We know your position on that.

A Sure.

Q The ranking member had asked you a question about whether the sources, Christopher Steele sources or subsources were ever in the U.S., and I believe you responded at the moment you're not aware. Do you know if Christopher Steele's sources or subsources were ever in the United States?

A Ever meaning?

Q Well, ever in the time period of 2015 forward.

A I believe one of them was. I'm quite certain, in fact, one of them was.
The others I couldn't say one way or the other.

Q Are you able to tell us if Christopher Steele himself told you the identity of his sources and subsources, without telling me the identity?

A I'm sorry, say that again.

Q Sure. Are you able to tell us whether Christopher Steele told you the identity of his sources and subsources?

A He -- there was a piece of paper. When I went to sit down at the table and read the document, there was also a piece of paper there of the names. So he was definitely letting me know who the sources were.

Q Okay.

A It wasn't a slip or anything like that. He --

Q He knew it, like Steele --

A He intended for me to know who the sources were.

Q "He" being Chris Steele?

A Yes, sir.

Q Thank you. And, to the best of your knowledge, were any identities of Christopher Steele's sources or subsources kept from you?

A To the best of my knowledge, no. I recognized two names as serious people. That's what I would say.

Q Okay, thank you.

A And I can't vouch for the others.

Q You had mentioned that Christopher Steele had spoken to his I guess

would then be former colleagues at MI6 about this, about the dossier. Do you know what those discussions were about? Did he talk to them about his research, his findings?

A He didn't go into detail. Since he is a British citizen and a former British public servant, he felt an obligation to share what he found with them. The way he described it to me is he felt the material that he had accumulated in these went beyond client privilege, if you will, that this was a matter of national security if, in fact, it was true or verified.

Q So it's your understanding that Steele shared the dossier with his former colleagues at MI6?

A The dossier and/or briefed them on it. It's possible he shared it with them. I don't -- I don't know for sure whether he did. I would assume he did.

Q But at least the information in it?

A Yes.

Q Whether he gave them a copy or not --

A Yes. Yes, sir.

Q -- he, Steele, shared the information of the dossier with his MI6 colleagues?

A That's my understanding, yes.

Q Do you know about when that happened?

A I almost have the impression it was an ongoing basis. My sense is that he maintains relations with people where he used to work, and that it was on an ongoing basis.

Q Also, sir, going back to one other point. There was -- correct me if I'm wrong, please. There was a point in time where Steele informed you that he,

Steele, didn't know why FBI interest came to an end. Is that accurate?

A Yes. He was not sure why, correct.

Q Can you give me a timeframe on when the FBI's interest came to an end?

A I think it was September-October timeframe.

Q Of 2016?

A Yes, sir.

Q But Steele never relayed to you why the FBI's interest in that information came to an end?

A He did not, no. I don't believe he knew himself. And I think this is the reason why he, through Sir Andrew Wood, reached out to me to get Senator McCain involved to try to give this an extra push, because he was worried that nothing was happening.

Q I see. So your impression was that Steele himself didn't know why the FBI's interest --

A Correct.

Q -- had sort of come to an abrupt end?

A That's right.

Q Are you aware of any individuals in the State Department that had this information, say, from the fall of 2016 going forward?

A He indicated to me that there were people in the State Department who had been made aware of this.

Q Do you know how they were made aware?

A I don't. I don't know whether before he decided not to travel here -- and that was the reason I went to London. He had decided by the fall of

2016 that he didn't feel comfortable coming to the U.S. anymore. I don't know whether he earlier on had himself reached out to people whom he might have known or whether it was done through others. I don't know.

Q Do you know who at the State Department he had informed of this dossier?

A The impression I had is it went high up into the State, into the State Department, possibly as high as the Secretary, but I can't say that from firsthand knowledge.

Q Okay. Did Steele say to you -- or tell me how he put it to you. Did he say: I, Christopher Steele, have informed high-level officials at the State Department about this information in the dossier?

A He felt that -- he thought the Secretary was at least aware of it. And he mentioned also that he thought Victoria Nuland the Assistant Secretary for Europe --

Q I'm sorry?

A Victoria Nuland, N-u-l-a-n -- sorry, N-u-l-a-n-d, who was the Assistant Secretary for Europe and Eurasia, he thought was also aware of it.

Q What made him think that this Victoria -- sorry?

A Nuland.

Q Nuland was aware of --

A I don't know whether it was firsthand impression that he himself had spoken to her, but he said to me he thought she was aware.

Q And he, Christopher Steele, told you this name, Victoria Nuland?

A Yes.

Q So obviously, he knew at least who she was?

A Yes.

Q And he had stated to you that she, Victoria Nuland, was aware somehow of the information that he was --

A Yes.

Q -- presenting you?

A Yes.

Q I think you said that Steele believed that General Flynn had had an extramarital affair with a woman in the United Kingdom. Do you have any --

A A Russian woman.

Q Sorry, a Russian woman.

A It may have been a dual citizen, but it was not anything, as you know, that's in this report, this dossier.

Q Right. Do you know if that's -- have you learned if any of that information is true or accurate?

A I don't know. And I don't know that he has been able to verify it.

Q Okay. Just a couple more questions.

A Sure.

Q Oh, has the FBI contacted you --

A No.

Q -- to speak to you about any matters --

A No.

Q -- in relation to what we're talking about here today?

A No, sir.

Q Any other government agencies, departments reach out to you --

A No.

Q -- on any of these matters?

A SSCI had --

Q Sure.

MR. ROBBINS: You know that we've answered questions for the Senate.

MR. KRAMER: Right.

██████████ I don't mean any congressional committees. Sorry, I should have had that clarified.

BY ██████████

Q There's one part, one last part I just wasn't following. There's something about a video. Can you just give me a quick summary on that again? I'm sorry.

A It's the video that's mentioned in the dossier of Mr. Trump in the Ritz Carlton. That's a video he thinks exists.

Q Okay. So, to your knowledge or did Steele ever tell you that that video does exist?

A He doesn't have it. He was not able to obtain it, to the best of my knowledge, at least up until I ended communication with him. But he believed it existed. He had mentioned the possibility of its existence to Sir Andrew, who, in turn, mentioned it to me and to Senator McCain.

Q He mentioned its existence?

A So Sir Andrew must have learned from Mr. Steele --

Q Okay.

A -- that there are rumors or speculation that such a video exists. Sir Andrew mentioned this in the very first time I heard about the existence of this dossier.

Q Do you know why Christopher Steele thought that video does exist?

A I think he just believed, based on what he had heard from his sources, that it does.

Q To your knowledge, you've never seen it or he's never communicated to you that it actually does?

A No. I think if he had seen it, it would have been out there by now.

Q That's all I have. Thank you.

A Thanks.

Q Thank you.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Good afternoon. I'm [REDACTED] with the minority. And, again, on behalf of everyone, we thank you for being here.

A Sure.

Q And so I'd just like to go over a few of the questions. I'd like to start. We've been referring to the sources, and there is a general description. What I'd like to know is if the description matches what you saw. When you saw the list of names, you said two were familiar. Afterwards, did you look up the other names to see who they were?

A No.

Q Okay.

A I took at face value the description he provided.

Q All right. According to the dossier, Source A is a senior Russian foreign military figure. Does that comport with what you had seen?

A I'm not sure I'm going to remember the names with the specifics, Source A, B, C, D and E.

Q If I read these, would you be willing to say whether that sounds like one of the names that was familiar to you, without divulging the name?

A We can try.

Q Okay.

MR. ROBBINS: Can I hear, what are you about to do?

██████████ Okay. I'm going to read the source descriptions pursuant to the BuzzFeed version of the dossier.

MR. ROBBINS: Okay.

██████████ And previous testimony was that Mr. Kramer recognized two of the names. I'm just trying to see, by general -- these very general descriptions whether he would at least identify for us which two had been familiar to him.

MR. ROBBINS: So you're going to hear --

██████████ And there will be no names.

MR. KRAMER: Descriptions.

██████████ Right.

MR. ROBBINS: So you're going to hear descriptions, and when you get to one that sounds like it might fit the two names that you know, you're going to be asked to say yea or nay. Are you willing to do that?

MR. KRAMER: I can't remember how they're described in here. I think if they're described in more detail than I would be prepared to acknowledge, but I'm willing to go down this road --

██████████ Fair enough. Let's get them in the record, because we've been discussing --

MR. KRAMER: I'm willing to go down this road and let's see how we go.

BY ██████████

Q Okay. So Source A, a senior Russian foreign ministry official -- figure.

A Yes.

Q Yes. Source B, a former --

A Sorry. Let me --

Q Let me go through all of them and then maybe you can pick the two.

A But can I -- I apologize for interjecting. My hesitancy with this is I don't want a witch hunt to then ensue of going after people in various ministries or agencies or things, based on the description of a person at a certain agency sounds right to me.

Why don't you go ahead. So with that caveat, if you don't mind, I just want to put that out there.

Q Let me read them all into the record, and when you have them as a body you can respond as you wish.

A That sounds fine. Thank you.

Q Source A, a senior Russian foreign ministry figure. Source B, a former top-level Russian intelligence officer still active inside the Kremlin. Source C, a senior Russian financial official. Source D, a close associate of Trump who had organized and managed his recent trips to Moscow. Source E, an ethnic Russian close associate of Donald Trump. Source F, a female staffer at the Moscow Ritz Carlton. Source G, a senior Kremlin official.

A So let me -- I guess the way I would answer that is by saying that those -- those sound right. I can't honestly say all of them, but, for the most part, they seem right to me. Sorry, some of the names were not provided, because I only saw five. And I think you've described one, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

Q So you saw five names?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Do you know if they were all Russian, the Russian ones mentioned here, or American, or not Russian?

A I would say the ones I saw, four were Russian and one was from -- yeah, four were Russian and one was from the region.

Q Thank you. All right. You had said that you discussed basically the dossier and that what you had picked up in D.C. What information did you provide to Mr. Steele that you had picked up in D.C.?

A What I was hearing from reporters who would contact me. So I think I mentioned several of the outlets, the Post, The Guardian, Yahoo, Mother Jones. And what I was hearing, if anything, in D.C., having been here for many years.

Q Of that information, did you provide anything to which Mr. Steele reacted with surprise or perhaps that he did not -- indicate that he did not know?

A I don't recall anything along those lines. I think he -- he had I believe other eyes and ears here in Washington, but I think I was an extra set for him.

Q You also mentioned that one of the -- according to the media, one of the suspected sources had been found dead in his car. Did that -- when you read that, did that alarm you?

A The -- the report of that person being found dead occurred before the dossier was published. Seeing that alarmed me. And without indicating whether I think that person was or was not a source, it is possible that people in Moscow thought that person was a source. I am now speculating here. But it is one of the reasons to explain my reluctance to mention any names. The person was found dead in the back of his car. It doesn't happen an awful lot.

Q And returning to the dossier, without going through it paragraph by paragraph, but some key subjects, to the best of your recollection, any detail that Mr. Steele or that you had discussed together? For example, the Rosneft sale.

A And sorry, do you have that page?

Q Oh, in the -- okay.

A Sorry. Tell you what, while you're looking for that, do you mind -- once you go to the bathroom once, you open the floodgates, so to speak. Can I run to the bathroom as you're looking for that, is that okay?

Q That's fine.

A I'll be right back.

Q Okay, fine.

A Sorry.

[Recess.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q Mr. Kramer, if you could please look at page 30, 30 to 31, describing a meeting, an alleged meeting between Igor Sechin and Carter Page, regarding a potential sale of an interest in Rosneft in exchange for change of U.S. policy.

A Right.

Q Was that discussed in any detail?

A Only to the extent that he and I thought that the Page visit to Moscow was something that could be verified one way or the other. But there wasn't much more detail than that. And by that, meaning that people looking into this, either in an official capacity or investigative journalists, was something to look into.

Q And have you read the testimony before this committee of Mr. Page?

A I have not. I've read about it, but I have not read Mr. Page's

testimony.

Q Did anything you read about it sound -- trigger any memory of your conversation with Mr. Steele?

A The only reaction I had to it was his reference to a Budapest trip. Otherwise -- I mean, I have been struck -- I mean, you're asking me about things --

Q Understood.

A -- after this, but that Mr. Page's description and story has seemed to have changed from where it first was.

Q And that's all you remember about the Rosneft? There was nothing about Igor Sechin or any other --

A No, but it was -- the person who was found dead in the back of his car was an associate of Mr. Sechin.

Q Turning to page 1, it states that Russian intentions for the deployment of compromising material on Hillary Clinton, quote/unquote, are still unclear.

Did you and Mr. Steele discuss the emails from multiple sources about Secretary Clinton that WikiLeaks, Guccifer 2.0, and DCLeaks had disseminated during the campaign?

A Not in any detail, really. Sorry, not in any detail, really. I recall from December 2011, Mr. Putin going out of his way to finger then-Secretary Clinton as being responsible for giving a, quote/unquote, signal to protesters to turn out in the streets. So Mr. Putin clearly was not a fan of Mrs. Clinton's.

Q And did you discuss that aspect with Mr. Steele about whether this was a -- that Russian activity during the campaign was directed to supporting Mr. Trump or --

A I think he and I had both talked about three objectives for the

Russians. One was to discredit and hurt the candidacy of Mrs. Clinton; the second was to boost the candidacy of Mr. Trump; and the third was to discredit the whole electoral system in the United States and our democratic system of government.

It's why, before I knew anything about this, pointing to the dossier, why in July of 2016 I led an effort with other Republicans after the WikiLeaks disclosure, saying that this was an attack on the United States, it shouldn't be viewed in partisan terms. And so I was public and vocal about that.

[12:10 p.m.]

BY [REDACTED]

Q And when members return, we will examine more about some of these events that we now know and that are outside the parameters of the dossier.

A Sure.

Q So I appreciate that. I'm just trying to see. We had been focusing to this point about Mr. Trump, and I was just wondering what discussions you may have had with Mr. Steele about Secretary Clinton?

A Yeah, there weren't really extensive conversations about it -- about her, sorry.

Q Okay. Thank you.

A Sure.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Thank you. As a broad matter, and this -- I apologize if this was already asked. Did you, did Mr. Steele discuss with you the other sort of kompromat, or compromising information, or material, or video tapes, or financial information that he either had heard was out there, or didn't make it into the written material?

A He had mentioned before he thought that there was -- that the Deutsche Bank relationship with Mr. Trump, and the Trump organization was worth looking into more. And beyond that, he did indicate to me he thought that there was a second video out there, but that he had not gotten much beyond that.

Q Did he -- let me take them separately.

A Sure.

Q I will start with the video, and then Deutsche Bank. On the video, on

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the apparent second video, did he discuss anything about what it pertained to?

A Just Mr. Trump in a compromising situation in a hotel. He didn't know really much beyond that.

Q Similar in nature to the salacious information --

A Yes.

Q -- with regard to the first video?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Anything else on that you can share?

A No.

Q Did he mention when that video referred back to?

A I don't think so.

Q And where it may have occurred?

A He may have said St. Petersburg, but I can't swear to that.

Q Okay. On Deutsche Bank, before I turn back to the Members, can you walk us through to the extent you can recall, why he thought that Deutsche Bank-Trump relationship was interesting?

A Deutsche Bank has very close ties to the Russians, and Deutsche Bank has also been fined by the United States Government. And Deutsche Bank, I believe, has been one of the only lenders at certain periods of time to Mr. Trump, and so he thought that those factors meant that Deutsche Bank was worth taking a look at in the relationship with Mr. Trump and the Trump organization.

Q Did he address in any way a timeframe, timeframe of that relationship, or what specific properties may be at issue?

A Not that I recall. I don't believe so.

Q Let me just check with our Members.

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A Yeah, sure.

MR. SWALWELL: I thank you. We just wrapped up votes. Mr. Kramer, there is a reference in the dossier to Jill Stein. Did Ms. Stein ever come up in your conversations with Mr. Steele?

MR. KRAMER: Only I think to the extent that she was at that same RT dinner in December 2015 that General Flynn attended.

MR. SWALWELL: You said that the meeting just outside Lenin was 4 hours in the morning, a meeting at the pub, and a ride back to the airport, but there were subsequent phone calls that would take place all the way up until, I think you said February, March. Is that right?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. SWALWELL: How long would you estimate that you talked on the phone collectively, after you left London with Mr. Steele? Are we talking about like hours of followup, or maybe 20 minutes total.

MR. KRAMER: Total.

MR. SWALWELL: Yeah, total.

MR. KRAMER: Could be a couple of hours all told, I mean --

MR. SWALWELL: Okay. Did the conversations consist of anything other than Mr. Steele asking you to follow up with press contacts and you updating him on what you were hearing, or was he in those conversations providing you with either corroborating information, or repudiating information in the dossier, or supplementing the dossier? You did mention that you learned later about Mr. Cohen --

MR. KRAMER: Right.

MR. SWALWELL: -- as well as that it could have been Budapest rather than

Prague, but other than corrections that he believed needed to be made to the dossier, did he supplement it in any way?

MR. KRAMER: The only, I think I may have mentioned already, is his reference that he had heard of the possibility that General Flynn had had an extramarital affair. That was the only other substantive thing that he raised that I recall.

MR. SWALWELL: I know Mr. Schiff is on his way back and I don't know if he was done. Let me just finally ask, Mr. Kramer, part of our investigation is -- the scope of our investigation is, you know, looking at who was responsible for interference in our campaign, whether any U.S. persons were involved; what the government response was at the time; and then, hopefully, making recommendations to the public, and lawmakers about what we can do.

MR. KRAMER: Uh-huh.

MR. SWALWELL: So from your perspective, as an expert on Russia, as somebody who met with the individual who put together this dossier, what would you recommend to the committee as far as following in that scope and what we can do to protect the American people from an interference campaign?

MR. KRAMER: Sure. As I mentioned, Congressman, in July of 2016, I led an effort by, I think, roughly 20 former Republican officials to issue a public letter to the Congress urging that the WikiLeaks release of the hacked DNC emails be viewed as an attack on the United States, not in partisan political terms. I stand by that position, have taken that position after that letter.

I believe very strongly that whether everything in here is accurate or not, it is consistent with Russian efforts to infiltrate into our system, to try to discredit and undermine our system, and that we need to do a much better job on issues of

transparency, on protection of electoral systems and voting, and that Congress has a critical role to play in this.

I think the special counsel has a critical role to play in this. And that's, I guess, a long-winded answer to your question. I'm sorry.

MR. SWALWELL: No, thank you, Mr. Kramer. I yield back to Mr. Quigley.

MR. QUIGLEY: Thank you. Mr. Kramer, have you read the ICA's report on Russian involvement with the 2016 presidential election?

MR. KRAMER: The January 9, 2017 report?

MR. QUIGLEY: Yeah. It's official titled Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections.

MR. KRAMER: I confess, Congressman, I have not read the whole thing, but I have read bits and pieces.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. What was your reaction to what you read -- that you read in their assessment?

MR. KRAMER: It seemed consistent with my own thinking that the Russians did not only try to interfere, but did interfere, which is not the same as saying it affected the outcome. I'm in no position to judge that, as the IC also said they were in no position to judge that. But their description of Russian actions and behaviors seem to ring true to me.

MR. QUIGLEY: Is it consistent with your knowledge of Russians strategic and tactical objectives and methodologies?

MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MR. QUIGLEY: I'm sorry. If you could couple the two, the ICA report and the dossier, are these, as a whole, consistent with Russian strategies and tactics?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. I would say they are, and have been practiced in

other countries. I think what we saw here in our country last year was the most egregious form. The term being "the weaponization of the information."

MR. QUIGLEY: Knowing what you do know about what the Russians did, and your knowledge of Russian activities and how they operate, is it possible, in your mind, that these operations would have taken place without Mr. Putin's knowledge?

MR. KRAMER: I think it's very unlikely. I would find it hard to believe that it would have happened without his knowledge, which is not to say that there are fingerprints of Mr. Putin on this.

MR. QUIGLEY: During the U.S. election season in August 2016, you wrote a column for The Washington Post entitled: "Russian is now a threat. The U.S. should treat it like one." In it you stated, quote: "The next President should recognize that Russia under Vladimir Putin is an authoritarian kleptocratic regime that poses a serious threat to our values, interests, and allies. We should continue to deter Russian aggression by reassuring our NATO allies that we will defend them. We must also support those living inside Russia who are struggling for a better, more democratic future," end quote.

Based on Hillary Clinton's words and actions, would Putin have expected her as President to set forth a policy consistent with your recommendations?

MR. KRAMER: It is hard for me to answer that, Congressman. I think my impression of analysis in Moscow is that she likely would have taken a tougher approach toward the Kremlin than Mr. Trump.

MR. QUIGLEY: So relations, for example, odd issues like sanction in the Ukraine?

MR. KRAMER: Yes sir. Yes. And possibly provision of lethal defensive

assistance to Ukraine as well.

MR. QUIGLEY: And NATO commitments. There again, I'm asking you, knowing what you know about them, their perception of how Mrs. Clinton would have acted as President that's different from President Trump.

MR. KRAMER: I believe that they think she would have taken a tougher approach. It is, as a Republican, it is, I have to say, odd to me that the Russians were a little more concerned about a Democratic Presidential candidate than they were about a Republican Presidential candidate.

MR. QUIGLEY: Can you imagine scenarios in which they would have likely supported a Democrat over a Republican had the primaries gone differently?

MR. KRAMER: I mean, in general, I think they feel that -- this is not meant as a partisan comment, but that Democrats are a little softer when it comes to dealing with Russia than Republicans over recent history.

So in general -- so that's why, I think, Mr. Putin's views about Mrs. Clinton are a bit of an exception rather than the rule.

MR. QUIGLEY: In the first 11 months of the Trump administration, how, given all the context of what you have been asked just now, how do you think this has played out, Russian expectations versus the realities of the Trump administration?

MR. KRAMER: The way I have answered this question in various settings before -- not one like this, I haven't had a setting like this before -- is I think you have to separate the President's rhetoric from the administration's actions and policies. I actually think the administration's actions and policies have been pretty good.

Sanctions have been maintained, largely thanks to the Congress. The effort which I believe was real of lifting sanctions in late January after the administration

came into office did not materialize.

Vice President Pence's trip to Estonia, and Georgia, and Montenegro was, I thought, a great trip reaffirming U.S. support for those countries, including Georgia's aspirations to join NATO. Secretary Mattis visited Ukraine. Curt Volcker who is a good friend of mine, the appointment of him as a special envoy for the Russia Ukraine crisis; and the recommendation, I gather it has not yet been decided by the President yet to provide Ukraine with lethal assistance, all of those things have been positive.

And I should add that the comments by Vice President Pence and Secretary Tillerson, and Secretary Mattis and Ambassador Haley, Director Pompeo, had been pretty tough on Russia, including in their confirmation hearings, and since.

And then you have the comments by the President. And it seems to me that is a -- I don't know if it is a parallel, or a different universe that we are operating under. So the words of the President matter enormously. But the actions of the administration have been rather positive, in my view.

MR. QUIGLEY: You also wrote involving Ukrainian sovereignty, a letter to the editor following the 2014 shoot down of the Malaysian plane, quote "Russian President Vladimir Putin is not part of the solution. He is part of the problem. The West has been very restrained, far too restrained, in my view, in doing everything possible to avoid an escalation with Russia."

What was your reaction? Well, first, were you aware of what took place during the Republican convention with the change in the plank as it related to Ukrainian sanctions?

MR. KRAMER: It was just what was -- I wasn't there. It was just as what was reported in the press.

MR. QUIGLEY: And what was reported in the press, what was your reaction?

MR. KRAMER: I was struck that it seemed to be the only language that was changed referring to providing lethal assistance to Ukraine to make it, I think, broader.

MR. QUIGLEY: And what was your reaction to the President's associates, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Sater, implementing the request of you Ukrainian opposition, parliamentarian Andre Artemenko --

MR. KRAMER: Artemenko, yes.

MR. QUIGLEY: -- to deliver to National Security Advisor Flynn, a so-called Russia peace proposal. You are aware of this?

MR. KRAMER: Just from what I read in the papers.

MR. QUIGLEY: And again your reaction?

MR. KRAMER: Odd that -- why anything proposed by Mr. Artemenko would be taken seriously was lost on me.

MR. QUIGLEY: Okay. In a 2014 article in the National Interest entitled "Kramer's Crusade," John Allen Gay wrote that he say you, quote, "Get into a heated, emotionally-charged exchange with the Russian Ambassador to Washington about his country's response to American sanctions pertaining to human rights."

The Ambassador at that time was Mr. Kislyak, is that correct?

MR. KRAMER: He was, yes.

MR. QUIGLEY: And this article, Mr. Gay wrote, is it accurate?

MR. KRAMER: I actually don't recall seeing the article by Mr. Gay. I do recall the exchange through Ambassador Kislyak, whom I knew when I worked in

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the State Department. He was a deputy foreign minister, a smart man. We met on numerous occasions. Then he attended this event that the Center for National Interest where I was a debater with Paul Saunders and he waited until the end of the event, criticize both me and the things I had said during the session, and I returned in kind.

MR. QUIGLEY: And just the gist of your points that he made versus your points?

MR. KRAMER: He took exception to my describing the Putin regime -- using the term "regime," and I said to him, I will describe the Russian leadership in the terms I want. We are in the United States, and I can say what I want.

He disagreed that the ban implemented by Mr. Putin on the adoption of Russian orphans by American citizens after the Magnitsky Act was signed into legislation was done for that reason, and I reminded him that his colleague in Dublin threatened the Irish Parliament with a similar ban on Irish citizens if they adopted the Magnitsky legislation. He claimed not to know about that, and he took issue with a few other things. And I pushed back very firmly.

MR. QUIGLEY: I'm sorry.

MR. KRAMER: Go ahead.

MR. QUIGLEY: I'm sorry, have you had contact with the Ambassador since that time?

MR. KRAMER: I have not, no. I don't think either one of us particularly wanted to after that. I saw him once at the Metropolitan Club from a distance, but --

MR. QUIGLEY: Did you find a media reporting credible about the former Ambassador was apparently dispatched to establish before the inauguration, a

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private channel of communications with Jared Kushner, and Michael Flynn to discuss foreign policy?

MR. KRAMER: Did I find?

MR. QUIGLEY: Were you aware of this reporting --

MR. KRAMER: No.

MR. QUIGLEY: -- of Mr. Kushner as reported allegedly trying to set up a back channel?

MR. KRAMER: Oh, I became aware of it only after it was in the press. I wasn't aware of it at the time, no.

MR. QUIGLEY: So you didn't have firsthand knowledge of that effort?

MR. KRAMER: Correct. Correct.

MR. QUIGLEY: And what was your reaction to that effort?

MR. KRAMER: I found it odd, but I couldn't explain it beyond that.

MR. QUIGLEY: And what -- based on your expertise, what's the Russian reaction to someone attempting to do something like that through the Russian Embassy.

MR. KRAMER: I'm not sure why an American, as part of the transition team, would want the channel that was separate from U.S. communications that were more secure.

MR. QUIGLEY: One moment.

[Discussion off the record.]

MR. QUIGLEY: Mr. Heck.

MR. HECK: [Speaking foreign language.]

I want to go back to the earlier discussion regarding Congressman Swalwell's question about what is it we can do to best protect ourselves and our allies. It is the part of this effort that I have been the most consistently frustrated we are not making more progress on, and in some ways is, in my opinion, perhaps the most important.

You apologized for your lengthy response to that question and I actually found it very, very brief. And you mentioned the investment needed to harden their elections and registration systems.

I would like to ask about sanctions. And let me preface this, Mr. Kramer, by suggesting I'm not an expert on the exact level and nature of the sanctions that we have approved.

But I guess I want to open with, do we have the right level or severity of sanctions proportionate to the Russian intrusion and interference in our elections last year?

MR. KRAMER: Let me, if I can, Congressman, let me preface it by saying I do think one thing I didn't include in my answer to the Congressman's earlier question is a full recognition and acknowledgment of Russian interference and not to -- unless there is a basis for it -- not to question the IC's assessment.

And it is not to suggest that everything the IC comes out with is 100 percent right. But having been in the Bush administration during the 2003 situation, the IC, I believe, has become much more careful in the things it produces, particularly when it ranks levels of confidence.

On sanctions, I have argued for a ramping up of sanctions.

MR. HECK: From where we are now?

MR. KRAMER: From where we are now. I think the legislation that the

Congress passed this summer and the President signed is a step in that direction. February 1, I believe, is the deadline for the administration to follow through on what Congress directed.

Sanctions have stayed in place. There has been a slight ramping up of sanctions in the past 11 months.

But having been involved in sanctions dealing with Belarus when I was in the State Department, sanctions are both punitive and they are psychological. The target of sanctions has to know that he is going to get hit with more sanctions if he doesn't change his behavior. And if you don't hit them with more sanctions, then he will adjust to the sanctions that are in place and not change his behavior.

So sanctions, in my view, have to be increased. I think it is important to have them targeted. But no sanction, in my view, including the possibility of expelling Russia from SWIFT, which is hard to do because you need the Europeans on board, but no sanction, in my view, should be taken off the table.

Taking steps off the table is tipping your hand, telegraphing to Putin what you won't do. And I argue in my book that that's not a smart policy.

MR. HECK: What's the title of your book?

MR. KRAMER: It is called -- if only this was public -- and it's also free -- so, it's called "Back to Containment: Dealing with Putin's Regime." It came out in August.

MR. HECK: So the clear implication of what you just said, however, seems to be that we not only need to levy stricter sanctions that we have, but there also has to be prospectively the threat for even greater sanctions beyond that which you would like to see us move to now.

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

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MR. HECK: Is that correct?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. HECK: So for those of us who are not sanction experts --

MR. KRAMER: Yep.

MR. HECK: -- can you give a little bit of color and description to what that step one would be in terms of -- let's assume implementation by February 1. I heard you -- I interpreted what you said to mean need to go beyond that.

MR. KRAMER: Yeah.

MR. HECK: What does that look like? Use examples or a range?

MR. KRAMER: Sure. I would include the entire Russian financial sector. And the sanctions that have been imposed that limit funding and financing of Russian loans have been very helpful.

I would go after Gazprom. Gazprom has been exempted from both U.S. and EU sanctions because the Europeans are firmly opposed to it because of their dependency on Gazprom. Gazprom is the gas monopoly in Russia.

I would include people whom I do not describe as journalists. I view them as hate-mongering propagandists. Those are people like Dmitry Kiselyov, who is on channel 1 TV, which is state controlled. He is the one who famously threatened that Russia would reduce the United States to radioactive ash. He's one that said that gays should have their hearts stripped out and pounded into the ground with a stake.

These are people who create an environment, in Russia and elsewhere, where people like my friend Boris Nemtsov was shot and killed yards from the Kremlin.

And so these aren't journalists. These are people whose purpose is to stir

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up anti-Americanism, to stir up division, and to make scandalous statements.

Kiselyov, interestingly enough, is on the EU sanctions list. He is not on the American sanctions list and he should be.

MR. HECK: What is his name?

MR. KRAMER: Dmitry Kiselyov, K-i-s-e-l-y-o-v. He is the main presenter on Russian state television.

There's another guy, Solovyov, who should be added.

I support the registration of RT -- I guess it is RT. Sputnik hasn't, I don't think, been required to register. I also think -- and I don't think it was a decision by Congress, I think it was the journalists who cover Congress, to strip RT and Sputnik of accreditation to cover Congress.

MR. HECK: Do you advocate for steps beyond registration of RT?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. I don't think the State Department or the White House or the Pentagon should give them accreditation to cover their press briefings. They do cover them. They interject with useless or diversionary questions, and giving them accreditation legitimizes them. They're not --

MR. HECK: State, Defense, and what other agencies?

MR. KRAMER: And the White House. Last I knew. It's possible that's changed. But they had allowed them in. I know for a fact they had been in State Department press briefings. It not only allows them to disrupt those briefings, it lends them legitimacy that they certainly don't deserve.

MR. HECK: So go after the entire Russian financial sector, go after Gazprom?

MR. KRAMER: Yes. And another I would say is implement court rulings. And I know it has been appealed, but Russia lost two huge court rulings, one in the

European Court of Human Rights for \$2 billion, the second in The Hague Arbitration Court, involving Yukos, which was the company owned by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the richest Russian, whose company was expropriated and then nationalized.

Not Khodorkovsky, but other shareholders in Yukos filed suit in The Hague and in the European Court of Human Rights. Both courts ruled against Russia, totaling \$52 billion.

The Russians have appealed The Hague ruling. It is still pending. But if that ruling is upheld, we should help enforce it. It reinforces rule of law, and it also goes after the Russians where it hurts them the most, which is their pocketbook.

MR. HECK: So again, the entire Russian financial sector, Gazprom, targeting specific individuals who are, quote, "journalists," but not really, implementing the court rulings, registration of RT, and limitations of RT's accredited status for coverage here. Those taken together.

Is there any other one that you have left out that you want to get on this list?

MR. KRAMER: The energy sector would be another. I mean, Gazprom is part of the energy sector. But more Russian entities in the energy sector. I mean, the Russian economy remains heavily dependent on oil and gas for export revenue. Roughly, I think, 50 percent, if I remember, of the economy is dependent on export of oil and gas.

And if you -- and one thing we are doing, which I strongly support, I think it's picked up under the current administration, is exports of LNG, which is a way of hurting the Russian -- Mr. Putin, where he gets his funds. There's been exports to Lithuania, to Poland, and I believe there are plans for upgrade or exports.

I think that is terrific. That would be another example on sort of separating

the actions and policies of the administration from the President's rhetoric.

MR. HECK: Mr. Kramer, if we were to do all of these things, in your expert opinion, are you asserting that this would be an effective deterrent for Mr. Putin and Russia to engage in the kind of election interference such as we experienced in 2016?

MR. KRAMER: I think it would make life much more complicated for Mr. Putin, and it would get, if not him to think twice, it would get people around him.

He needs people to implement what he wants. He needs enablers. And if you go after the enablers -- I, by the way, would also favor freezing or chopping -- in the book I argue lopping off some zeros from Mr. Putin's bank accounts and from other bank accounts of people close to him.

When I worked in the State Department, and it has now been public in The New York Times, I think in 2014 there was a reference to a 2007 CIA assessment of Mr. Putin's wealth. At that time it was estimated to be about \$40 billion. I'm not disclosing anything classified.

MR. HECK: \$40 billion?

MR. KRAMER: \$40 billion with a "b." The Times published this, so I'm not disclosing anything classified.

My impression is that the U.S. Government has gotten better at finding out where these various accounts are, even though I'm sure none of the accounts has Mr. Putin's name on it. But lopping off a few zeros from these accounts, and then having Russian officials bitch and moan that they have lost stolen funds, I'd like to see that.

MR. HECK: So back to the question. You said it would complicate his life. But I'm really looking for --

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MR. KRAMER: I think it would act as a deterrent, yes, sir. I think the sanctions -- I'm sorry to interrupt you -- I think the sanctions that were imposed by the U.S. and the EU after he annexed Crimea and then moved into Donbask kept him from going further into Ukraine. So I think there is a recent historical basis on which to say that sanctions can act as a deterrent.

Sorry.

MR. HECK: No, that's exactly where I was going. Thank you for anticipating.

MR. KRAMER: Sure.

MR. HECK: I think that's it. One thing left to say: [Speaking foreign language].

MR. KRAMER: [Speaking foreign language.]

MR. CASTRO: You mentioned a little while ago that you were basically pleasantly surprised that in terms of the administration's policy, the administration was still being tough on Russia, even though the President's rhetoric was out there. But what do you make of President Trump not enforcing the latest round of congressional sanctions so far?

MR. KRAMER: Congressman, I think --

MR. CASTRO: Or dragging its feet.

MR. KRAMER: And I know, I think it was the State Department and Treasury that had to provide the initial report that was a few weeks late.

As I understand it -- and now living in Miami, I confess, I don't follow this as closely as I used to, there is a life outside the Beltway, as you know in your own districts -- I believe they have until February 1 to follow through on the next step of sanctions.

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And I know Wes Mitchell, for example, who is the assistant secretary for Europe and Eurasia at the State Department, he has said publicly, I believe, whether before the House or the Senate, that the administration will live up to that timeline.

MR. CASTRO: What indication would it be if they don't move on these sanctions by February 1?

MR. KRAMER: It would be a bad indication. I mean, I think Congress should demand action because you passed this legislation and the President signed it. It would not be a good sign.

MR. CASTRO: I don't know whether you saw yesterday, but former DNI James Clapper made a comment, with respect to the relationship between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, that Vladimir Putin knows how to handle an asset.

You agree that Vladimir Putin knows how to handle an asset?

MR. KRAMER: Well, without reference to Mr. Trump, or President Trump, yeah. I mean, he was only a colonel, however, in the KGB. It wasn't like he reached the cream of the crop until the late '90s when he became the head of the FSB. So he obviously had done something right to reach pinnacle.

But, yes, his training is as a KGB officer. He was posted to Dresden, which is not the most exotic place to be posted as a KGB officer. But, yeah, he knows what they are supposed to do.

MR. CASTRO: And that question is a prelude to my second question, which is, based on your expertise, based on everything you have seen and read, do you believe that President Trump is an asset of Vladimir Putin?

MR. KRAMER: I'm not in a position to really say one way or the other, sir, I'm sorry.

MR. CASTRO: Okay. Let me ask you, have you received any threats because of your role in events regarding this Russia issue?

MR. KRAMER: No, I have not. I left Washington in May. I did it not because of this. I did it for personal family reasons, family health reasons. And there are quite a few Russians, as the Congresswoman knows, in the Miami area. But I have not received any threats.

MR. CASTRO: Okay. Let me ask you about The National Interest. The National Interest is the publication of the Center for National Interest, which hosted candidate Trump's first foreign policy address in April 2016.

MR. KRAMER: Right.

MR. CASTRO: CNI has a reputation for being very favorably disposed to Russia and Putin. Do you think that reputation is well grounded?

MR. KRAMER: The National Interest has attacked me on several occasions, so I'm not a big fan. I don't know whether --

MR. CASTRO: Are they perceived as a mouthpiece for the Kremlin?

MR. KRAMER: That's probably unfair. I think they certainly have given a platform to pro-Kremlin people more than most. But I think they have also run pieces that are a little more critical.

MR. CASTRO: And what was your reaction to the Trump campaign choosing CNI as its host for this important event, his first major foreign policy speech? And what message did it send to the Kremlin?

MR. KRAMER: I'm not sure. Well, I mean, certainly the Center for National Interest has promoted better U.S.-Russian relations. On its face, that's not necessarily a bad thing. The way one goes about to do it is a different matter. I have not agreed with most of the reports and papers that they have issued, and I

don't agree with most of the stuff that their journal publishes.

MR. CASTRO: Did you attend the Mayflower event?

MR. KRAMER: I did not.

MR. CASTRO: Okay. A member of the CNI board, Ambassador Richard Burt, acknowledged he wrote part of the candidate's address. Do you have any knowledge of that beyond media reporting? Or do you know Ambassador Burt, consider him a friend of Russia?

MR. KRAMER: I don't know beyond media reports. He and I have appeared once or twice, once on "PBS NewsHour" debating on Russia. That was a couple of years ago.

I don't know him well at all. But what I do know, generally, we don't agree.

MR. CASTRO: And do you know Dimitri Simes, the chairman whom Putin referred to as, quote, "my American friend"?

MR. KRAMER: I know him. I have known him for quite a few years. I first, I think, got to meet him or was introduced to him in '93 or '94. He was still at the Carnegie Endowment at that time. I don't maintain a close relationship with him.

MR. CASTRO: Do you know him well enough to assess his political leanings or his leanings for or against the Kremlin?

MR. KRAMER: I would say they're complicated. He certainly has good ties to people in the Kremlin. But I'm not sure I would call him -- you know, the old term used to be a comsymp, communist sympathizer. I don't know that I would call him a Putinsymp. But, you know, he has got good ties.

MR. CASTRO: I guess, let me ask you, I mean, because you are an expert on Russia, many of us still think, when we think of Russia, we think of Communism because for so long there was this war waging, Cold War, between the United

States as a democratic country, democratic capitalist country, and the Soviet Union as a Communist country.

How would you characterize Russia today?

MR. KRAMER: In ideological terms?

MR. CASTRO: Yeah. Do you still think of it as a Communist country?

MR. KRAMER: No.

MR. CASTRO: How would you describe it today?

MR. KRAMER: No, it is not a Communist country. It is a very corrupt capitalist country -- with a growing state role, however. The role of the state in the economy has increased under Putin.

There is no ideology beyond Putinism, which is to say that Putin's driving objective is staying in power. His number one objective is staying in power. His number two objective is staying in power. And guess what his number three objective is, is staying in power.

That is his ideology, and he will do whatever is necessary, whether -- I start the book with a description of bombings that occurred in 1999 in three Russian cities that killed 300 people. I suspect that elements of the FSB, not necessarily Putin himself, were behind those bombings to turn the political situation upside down.

He launched a brutal military campaign in Chechnya that propelled him to the Presidency. He will arrest the richest man in Russia, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, in 2003. He will create an environment in which journalists and others are shot and killed or poisoned like Vladimir Kara-murza.

He'll stop at nothing to stay in power. And as you know, he recently announced he will, surprise, surprise, run for reelection in the March 18 Presidential election next year.

MR. CASTRO: All right. Let me just finish a few more questions on Dimitri Simes and then I will pass it back over.

Do you have any knowledge, outside of media reporting, regarding Mr. Simes' relationship to the Trump campaign or officials?

MR. KRAMER: No, other than hosting that speech, I don't know.

MR. CASTRO: Documents produced to this committee indicate that Dimitri Simes suggested to Jared Kushner that CNI host the Mayflower event and subsequently provided guidance to Mr. Kushner on how the Trump campaign should handle, quote, "the Russia question" during the last month of the campaign.

Do you have any knowledge, outside of media reporting, regarding his relationship to Vladimir Putin?

MR. KRAMER: No. And I actually wasn't even aware of those media reports, I'd have to admit.

MR. CASTRO: Henry Kissinger is the chairman emeritus of CNI and has been described as one of the few Americans who has regular access to Vladimir Putin. Is that your understanding?

MR. KRAMER: He certainly has met Putin on a number of occasions, yes.

MR. CASTRO: And do you know whether Mr. Kissinger had any unofficial role in advising the Trump campaign on foreign policy?

MR. KRAMER: I don't know.

MR. CASTRO: Do you know whether he is an adviser to the Trump administration?

MR. KRAMER: I don't know.

MR. CASTRO: Thank you.

Pass back to Mr. Quigley.

Mr. QUIGLEY: Unless anyone else has questions, I want to close with one final question.

Knowing what you know and you've experienced, you had a pretty good idea of what Mr. Putin had in mind when they launched this -- we call it meddling, but, you know, attack on the democratic process here.

Has this been stymied in any way by the fact that it got out and in a very public way, not just the IC's assessment that it was Russia who did this, and they did it to favor one candidate over another, and now there's this very public investigation?

The fact that they got found and there's this reaction within the United States and the world, do you think that stymied him at all or how has that affected what he has done or will do?

MR. KRAMER: I don't think it has stymied him. I think -- I don't know that this has played out exactly the way he anticipated.

I don't agree with those who argue he has buyer's remorse. His goals may have shifted. I think his goal was to get sanctions lifted, and I think he felt that a President Trump was more likely to lift sanctions than a President Clinton.

Sanctions have not been lifted, in large part thanks to the Congress, but also people in the administration.

But the reason I don't think he has buyer's remorse is I think he loves the fact that -- this is not a criticism, please don't take it this way -- that we are so focused on ourselves right now, that Republicans and Democrats are at each other's throats. And it is not an argument not to take this seriously. I don't mean that in the least.

But I think our internal focus is giving him an open door to do what he wants, whether here or elsewhere. And I think -- I did read the Washington Post story last

week -- I do think it is a mistake not to have convened a National Security Council meeting on Russian interference and how to prevent it in the future if that report is accurate.

And it seems to me that, while both investigating what happened and doing the best possible, Congress and the administration need to focus on how to make sure this doesn't happen again.

And I think both parts of that are important. I think there has been too much of the former and not enough of the latter, if I can put it that way.

MR. QUIGLEY: Just a quick followup.

MR. KRAMER: Maybe not too much of the former, but there has been plenty of the former and not enough of the latter.

MR. QUIGLEY: But in the Russian Kremlin playbook, clearly, one of goals is always to sow discord, correct?

MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: And he won there?

MR. KRAMER: There, there is no buyer's remorse because he got what he wanted.

MR. QUIGLEY: And perhaps it was because it was dry kindling and perhaps we were all too willing to accept the worst in each other. I don't know if you agree with that or not.

MR. KRAMER: Yeah, I will let you --

MR. QUIGLEY: Maybe that's the epitaph so far of what we've learned. But I certainly appreciate your being here. Thank you.

MR. KRAMER: Thank you, sir.

[Whereupon, at 12:55 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

